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IRISH REPUBLICAN SOCIALIST PARTY

an camchéachta

February 1990

THE STARRY PLOUGH NO 8 FEB 1990 IRELAND 30p BRITAIN 40p.

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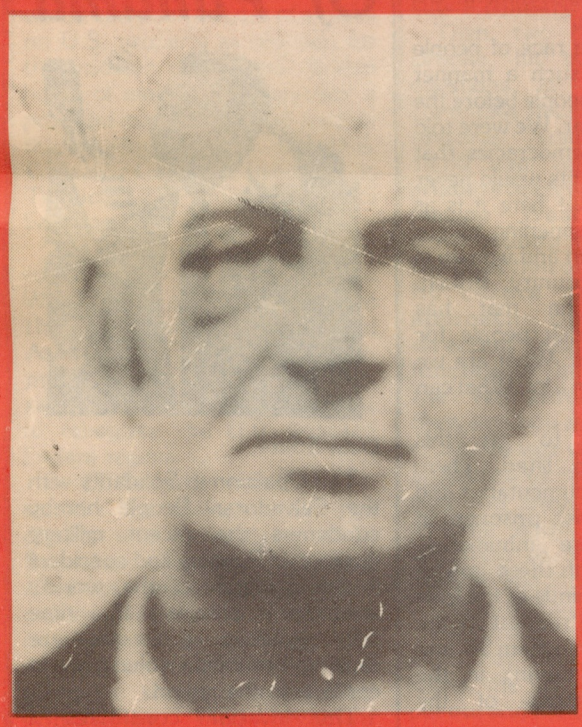
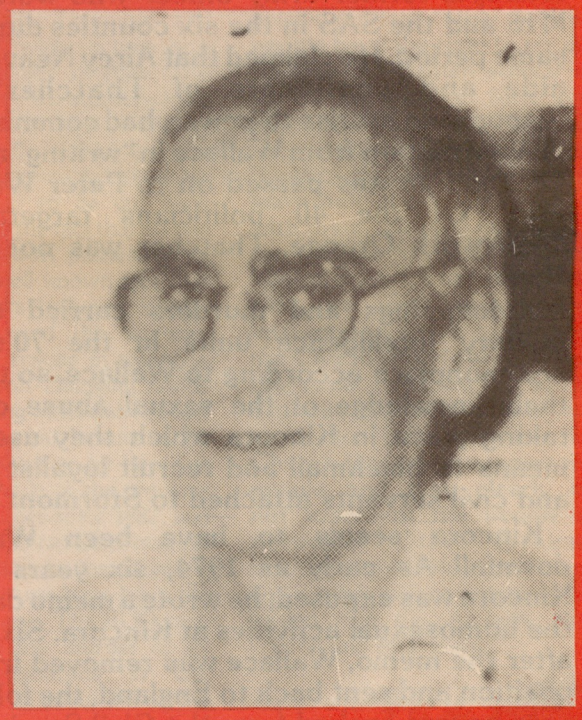
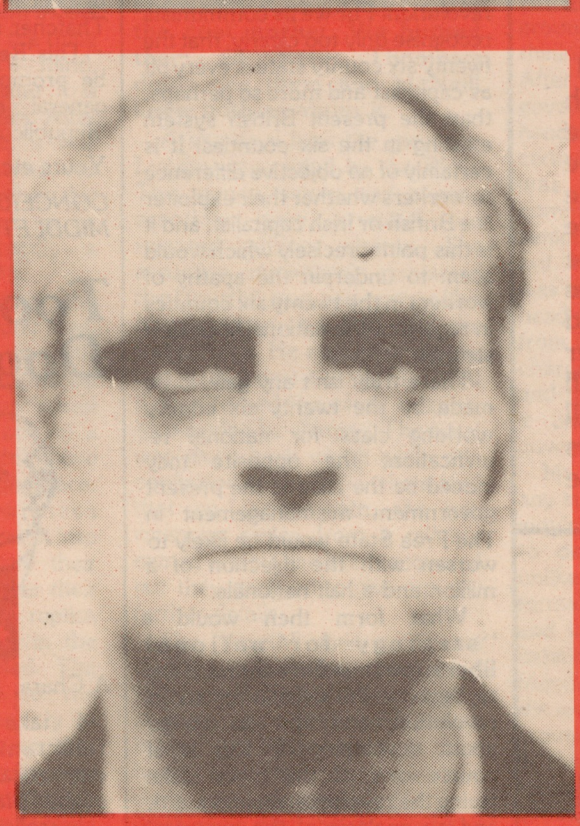






FREE THEM NOW

STARRY PLOUGH EDITORIAL

Over the past few months we have been treated to saturation coverage by the media of what they describe as the popular overthrow of the "corrupt regimes" in Eastern Europe with their faceless bureaucrats and secret police forces responsible for murder, tortue etc. Western capitalist democracy on the other hand, has been held up as the goal to be aimed for, its virtues of freedom and government accountability to the people extolled at length.

So it's pretty ironic that the spotlight has now turned on the internal workings of British "democracy" where we find faceless civil servants, apparently lying to ministers and even the P.M. with secret intelligence armies carrying out murders, kidnappings and smear campaigns.

The person at the centre of this whole sordid affair, Collin Wallace was a former Army Press Officer based at Thievpal Barracks in Lisburn in the early 1970's. His job was to discredit individuals in both republican and loyalist circles and to spread misinformation about military operations. Clockwork Orange was the official name give to the misinformation and smear campaign which according to Wallace was to be extended to include British politicians and in particular to destabilise the Wilson government.

Substance to the story was backed up by Fred Holroyd, former army officer who worked for M16 and the SAS in the six counties during the same period. He claimed that Airey Neave, close aide and confidante of Thatcher's and responsible for rise to power, had commissioned disinformation from Wallace in "writing" and this information was passed on to Peter Wright of M15. Of the 40 politicians targetted by Clockwork Orange, Thatcher was not among them.

Kidnappings and murders carried out by military intelligence units in the 70's were commonplace according to Wallace, so too was their knowledge of the sexual abuse of boys taking place in Kincora which they used as a means to blackmail and recruit loyalist figures and civil servants attached to Stormont.

Kincora seems to have been Wallace's downfall As early as 1974, six years before Kincora was exposed, he wrote a memo detailing the homosexual activities at Kincora. Six weeks after the memo, Wallace was removed from his position and sent back to England, the following year he was sacked from the Civil Service.

Some facts are inescapable: top civil "servants" have the real power in the British capitalist state; this power is used to further the interests of the ruling capitalist class; they are prepared to use any methods including the sexual abuse of children and murder to preserve their system of government and discredit those who would oppose them. They obviously see the dangers of a revolutionary situation in Ireland and its relevance to their maintenance of power in Britain. They fear genuine democracy and will prevent it at all costs. No amount of exposure will change the basic ruling system. Only its destruction will lead to the emergence of genuine democracy.

THE I.R.S.P.

Please send me more information about the Irish Republican Socialist Party.

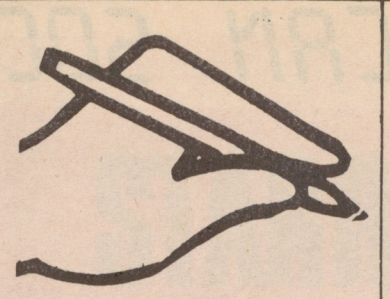
Name: .....

Address: .....

.....

SEND TO: Secretary, I.R.S.P., 392 Falls Rd., Belfast 12,

Secretary, I.R.S.P., 34 Upper Gardiner St., Dublin.



Armed Struggle And The Vanguard

As a revolutionary communist party, it is obviously our role to identify the various issues which arise due to the class conflict between the working class and capitalists and to articulate the class nature of these conflicts, with a view to raising the awareness of the various sectors of the working class involved in these specific issues. It is only with this development of class consciousness that we can hope to make larger sections of our class aware of the less apparent issue of class conflict.

It would seem then, that with this philosophy as our starting point, we should be structuring articles for *"An Camcheachta"* in such a manner that they relate the specific issues of the day to the general issue of class conflict which underpins them. It is with this approach in mind that I would like to open a debate on the issue of the war against British Imperialism, and how this issue can best be articulated, so as to relate it to the overall class struggle of which, here in Ireland, it is a major factor.

The armed struggle here at present could be defined as being mainly, if not completely, nationalist in character. That is, the majority of people involved in the war see it as the means by which the end of National re-unification can be achieved. These people may well see beyond this point, but presently they are involved in articulating the need for armed struggle solely for the purpose of re-unifying the National territory. The obvious inference here then, is that the six counties will be absorbed into the twenty six county structure when the brits go.

It is equally obvious then, that this strategy for liberation is definitely not a vehicle for social revolution. For we as communists recognise only too clearly, that the twenty six county state is every bit as capitalist and more so perhaps, than the present British system existing in the six counties. It is certainly of no objective difference to workers whether their exploiter is a British or Irish capitalist, and it is this point precisely which would seem to underpin the apathy of workers in the twenty six counties in regard to the national liberation struggle.

There truly isn't any gain to be made by the twenty six county working class for national re-unification; the opposite may indeed be the case as the present government mismanagement in The Free State would be likely to worsen with the injection of a million and a half nationals.

What form then would a **"strategy for national liberation"** need to assume, if it is to become the vehicle for social revolution, and how do we go about developing it? This is of course one of the main tasks facing the revolutionary vanguard, and an analysis of the historical development of our armed struggle in the columns of *"An Camcheachta"* might well go some way toward providing a basis upon which a successful strategy, relating the specifics of the armed struggle to the class conflict could be developed, with a view to intensifying the support for, and participation in, the armed struggle alongside the raising of class consciousness.

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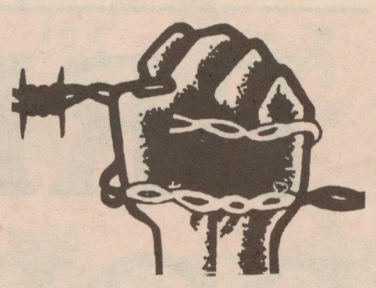
Gary Adams
Republican Socialist POW
Portlaoise.

Letters

'Release Campaign' Needed



Dear Editor,

I am writing to you to express my views on Irish prisoners in British prisons. Thankfully, the Guildford Four are now released after fifteen years of barbaric treatment by the British establishment and their lackies. These four innocent people were imprisoned because they were **Irish**. Those who arrested them, made the accusations, hid their alibis, stitched them up and finally ensured their imprisonment, did so for this reason.

The last time a race of people were treated in such a manner were the Jewish people before the Second World War. We were told by the world's democracies that such barbaric events would never be seen again. But here it is as bright as day, happening to our fellow country men and women in a neighbouring country, Britain. The same nation that has oppressed the Irish people for hundreds of years. What are we doing about it? Not a lot. What can we do about it?

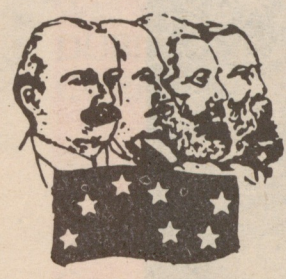
Firstly, work to get this broadcasting ban lifted. Then, show through documentaries and interviews how Irish prisoners in British gaols are inhumanely treated. Then, with these images still fresh in the minds of the Irish public, step up the 'request' for the release of the Birmingham Six and all the others suffering in the diabolical institutions of the Thatcher regime.

This 'Release Campaign' should be promoted on the scale of a general election all over the 'Republic of Ireland.'

Yours etc.

CONCERNED REPUBLICAN
MIDDLETON, CO. CORK.

Too Much Dogma



A Chara,

I take pen to paper, to reluctantly but nonetheless emphatically, criticise the content of the *"Starry Plough."*

In realising that the I.R.S.P. took an historic decision at the last Ard Fheis to adopt the principles of Marx and Lenin, thus becoming a Marxist-Leninist Party, it is with increasing alarm that I forsee the paper becoming entrapped in a quagmire of Marxist-Leninist dogma.

It is undisputable that the Republican Socialist Movement is steadily progressing in the direction hoped by us all i.e. it becoming the vanguard of the working class but I believe that the paper is being used by party exponents as a medium to debate their advanced marxism etc. to such an extent that you could say it was an overkill.

Instead the Editor(s) and other capable contributors should be using the *Starry Plough* to educate, enlighten and inspire the Irish Proletariat in a language more basic and comprehendable, i.e. the vernacular - language of the ordinary people.

Let us continually and at every opportunity expose to the people of Ireland, north and south, the futility of remaining loyal to their old, often ancestral political roots and support or better still join the only non-sectarian genuine revolutionary party in the 32 counties, the I.R.S.P.

Let us move with the times and try to re-evaluate the communist position in modern society and more importantly in Irish society today. But let us also be on our guard against trekking the reformist and collaborationalist road trodden by debased socialist groupings now masquerading in our country.

Yours sincerely,

Red Speedwagon.

U.S. Invasion Of Panama

Dear Editor,

The Coalition in Solidarity with the Salvadoran People hereby condemns the recent military invasion of Panama and considers it an outrage to the world's conscience, precisely at a time when historic processes are seeking political solutions to conflicts in the region.

The invasion constitutes a significant act of international terrorism that demonstrates the shamelessness of the Bush administration, and once again confirms that we can not naively hope that the United States government will keep its commitments with the countries it still considers to be in its backyard.

In Bush's press conference Wednesday, December 20th, he tried to justify the use of naked aggression against Panama with four arguments:

- **"To safeguard the lives of Americans."** Americans have been much safer in Panama than on the streets of most American cities. Now because of this invasion, scores of U.S. troops are dead and an undetermined number injured.
- **"To defend democracy in Panama."** How can a government imposed by U.S. tanks be democratic?
- **"To combat drug trafficking."** The U.S. government doesn't have to invade Panama to find drug traffickers, instead it should send these same troops into Wall Street where the bulk of U.S. drug money is laundered, closer to home. The Iran-Contra case involved the use of drug money right in the White House.
- **"To defend the Panama Canal**

Letters Cont.

treaties." The invasion, and other military actions against Panama's leadership, are a last-ditch attempt to set up a puppet government before January 1st, 1990, when the treaties call for the administrator of the Canal to be appointed by Panama for the first time ever.

This invasion creates a grave crisis, not only for Panama but for the entire region of Central America. We are deeply concerned that this latest act of aggression will foreshadow a more aggressive and bloody U.S. policy in El Salvador against the popular uprising there. What does the future hold for Nicaragua following the February elections in that country?

We are deeply disturbed with our government's response to the invasion; that it has endorsed this action along with the Cristiani administration of El Salvador and predictably that of Margaret Thatcher of Britain.

Regardless, the response from leaders in Central and Latin America to the invasion has been swift. Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega called for "**one big army**" of Latin America and Caribbean people and governments to "**defend the continent's dignity and sovereignty.**"

The armed revolutionary groups M-19 in Columbia and Alfaro Vive in Ecuador announced the formation of a Simon Bolivar Brigade to "**go to Panama and fight U.S. terrorism.**"

In Chile, the Manuel Rodriguez Patriotic Front announced that it would carry out a series of attacks on U.S. property as reprisals for the invasion of Panama. Within hours of making the statement a powerful bomb exploded outside the headquarters of the U.S. Chilean Cultural Institute in *Temuco, 275 miles south of* Santiago.

The Peruvian government recalled its ambassador to Washington, and withdrew from the Inter-American Mutual Assistance Treaty. The vice-president of Bolivia, Luis Ossio, said his government would refuse to recognise the U.S. imposed Endara regime.

In El Salvador the F.M.L.N. stated: "**In defence of the dignity and sovereignty of El Salvador, Panama, Central America and Latin America, we call on all our commanders and combatants to intensify the struggle and carry our offensive through to its final conclusion. This invasion reaffirms the legitimacy of our armed struggle and once again shows the illegitimacy of the fascist regime of Alfredo Cristiani; a regime which bombs its civilian population and murders priests with a policy of state terrorism that matches the policy of its financiers in the north.**"

Finally, on behalf of the coalition we would like to thank the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP) for its continued support of the people in Central and Latin America through your paper, the *Starry Plough.*

Venceremos

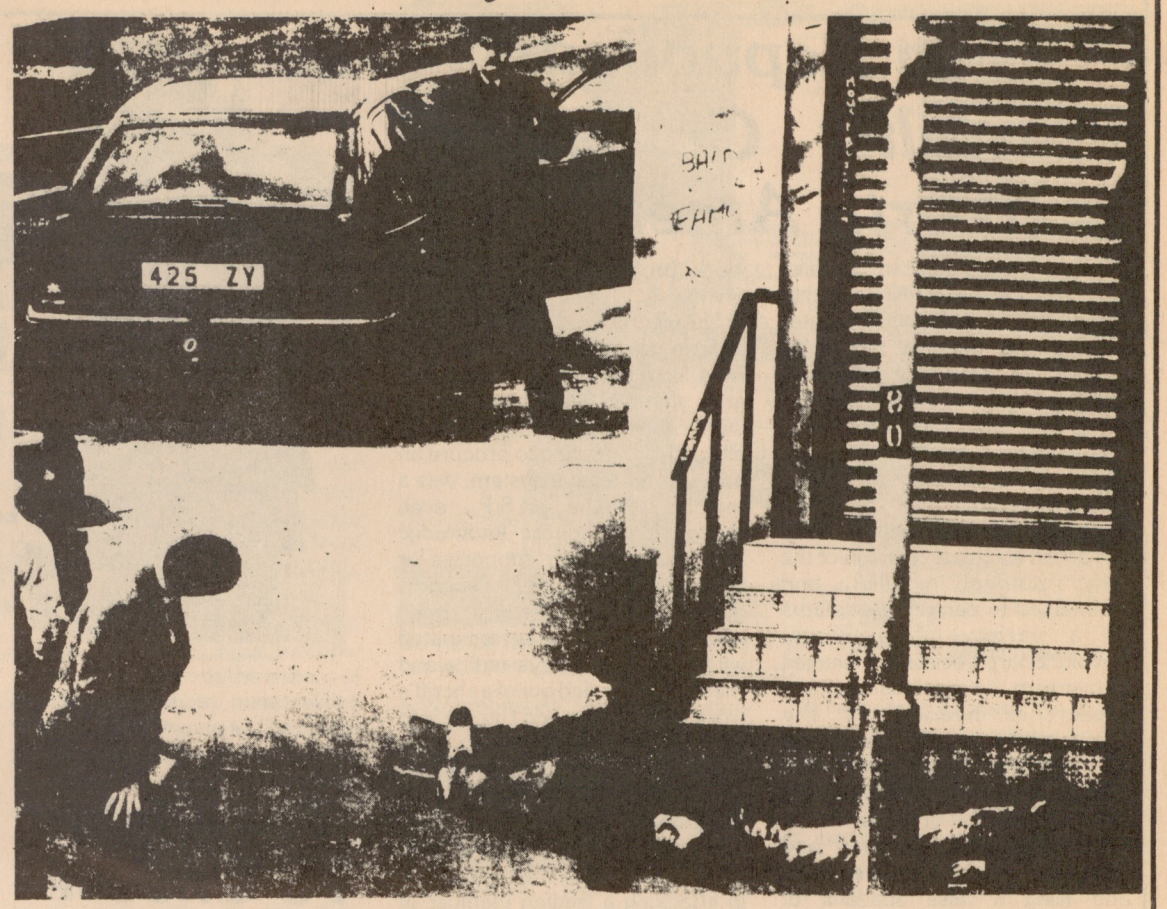
Salvador Ochoa
Coalition in Solidarity with the Salvadoran People
100 Argyle Street
Regina, Saskatchewan
Canada, S4R 4C3.

Letters Welcome

If you have any comments, questions, or you want to reply to any of these letters. Please write to the Editor, Starry Plough, 392 Falls Road, Belfast 12, Ireland.

The Editor reserves the right to edit letters due to lack of space.

Planned Execution Of Three Irishmen



On the morning of Saturday, January 13th, an army undercover team, at the junction of the Falls and Whiterock Roads in West Belfast, brutally gunned down in cold blood three young men, John McNeill, Eddie Hale and Peter Thompson, who were involved in an attempted robbery of Sean Graham's bookmakers shop. In front of over 20 witnesses, one soldier riddled the unarmed John McNeill, as he sat at the wheel of the car, while the other proceeded to empty his magazine into Peter Thompson who was also unarmed and Eddie Hale, who on hearing the first shots, were running out of the bookies. One eyewitness described this soldier's attitude: "**He was like a real nut. He had a frenzied look on his face.**" The other gunman then moved in and delivered the coup-de-grace, shooting Hale and Thompson in the head. A passer-by, pensioner Jim Carlin was shot in the shoulder.

The soldiers calmly got back into their car, a green Vauxhall Astra, and sped off, quickly followed, according to eye-witnesses, by a silver coloured car whose occupants had been giving them cover.

Predictably, the British propaganda machine swung into action in an exact replay of the Gibraltar killings. The first statement was issued by the RUC, short and sweet: "**They were shot dead by two passing plain clothes British soldiers who saw a robbery in progress.**"

Then, two days later, Peter Brooke, hit by a barrage of questions in the House of Commons issued a more detailed prepared statement: "**About 10.50 a.m. on Saturday two soldiers in civilian clothes were leaving West Belfast and driving along the Falls Road in the direction of the City centre. By chance they saw a car approach from the other direction and stop at the junction of the Falls Road and the Whiterock Road. They then saw two masked men, one of whom was armed with what appeared to be a sub-machine gun run from the car into a betting shop.**" So naturally, according to Mr. Brooke, they stopped and intervened, thinking it was an IRA robbery in progress.

Any propaganda expert will tell you, that after a controversial killing, the first statement that is put out and the consequent media hype that goes with it, is the thing that sticks in people's mind, regardless of whether later it is shown to be a pack of lies. After the killings in Gibraltar, it was announced that a massive car bomb had been found. When this was subsequently found to be untrue, there was hardly a mention of it in the media.

The facts surrounding the murder of the three young men, outside the bookies are still emerging, but what is absolutely clear is that no undercover squad accidentally stumbled on to a robbery, as they couldn't have known a robbery was taking place. According to eyewitness accounts, the men who went into the bookies did not have their balaclavas pulled down over their faces nor were their replica weapons brandished out in the open but were concealed. The R.U.C. has confirmed to the Thompson family nearly a fortnight after the shooting, that their son was not carrying any weapon and that the second gun had been found inside the bookies along with a balaclava. The fact that eyewitnesses state that two undercover cars were involved, also points to a planned operation.

Recently, a much more sinister light was to be thrown on to the possible motive for the murders on the Falls Road. The "fourth" man involved in the robbery who remained behind in the bookies, has been in hiding since then in fear of his life. But he decided to speak to the press in order to counteract the lies being told by the Brits, and hopefully by making it public, protect himself.

The story begins on December 9th, when two sports bags were stolen from a blue Nissan Bluebird. The contents of the bags included a 9mm pistol, a Heckler and Koch machine gun, and other army items including military intelligence files and clothing. This tallies with an RUC report that two weapons had been stolen from a military owned vehicle in Drumbo on the same date.

The "fourth" man along with some of his associates bought the two weapons for £200. The Heckler and Koch was put in a lock-up garage in Lurgan and the pistol was taken to Belfast along with the other Army items. In his own words he describes what they found in the bags "**There was a big map of Belfast. A big map with small black arrows pointing say, one to this house and one to that house. There were loads of them. I didn't know what it was. They were in the coat pocket. We burned them all. Peter Thompson didn't see them and McNeill knew nothing about it.**

A few days later the garage in Lurgan was raided by the RUC. The garage owner and a gang associate were arrested but released without charge. The associate immediately contacted the "fourth" man and some of his friends whom he had sold the weapons to. He explained that he had made a deal with the RUC that if he returned the other weapon, he wouldn't be charged. The pistol was given back which again was confirmed by the RUC who stated that on January 5th, the two weapons stolen from a military owned vehicle had been recovered but they declined to give out any further details.

The "fourth" man confirmed that they all felt they were being followed. He states that a bugging device was later discovered behind the fridge-freezer of their home and that telephone calls were being monitored. He then went on to describe the events of that day: "**I went in first, my hood was rolled up like a wee monkey hat on my head because that's the way we always go in. I had the gun inside my coat. I went up the steps with the pistol. Eddie had the machine-gun.**" Inside the bookies, he knew something was wrong when he heard the side door being banged. He turned back from the door, pulled his hood off, put his gun down and lay on the ground beside the rest of the customers.

It is clear from these facts, that Eddie Hale, Peter Thompson and John McNeill were victims of a carefully planned murder. But why? Did the stolen weapons have a murky history? Was it vital to silence anyone who had seen the military intelligence files? In which case they had to be got back quickly, hence the fact that no-one was charged with possession of them. It's a well known fact that collusion exists between loyalist paramilitaries and the 'security forces' which results in weapons and information changing hands or going missing with relative ease.

One thing we can be sure of, the true facts will never be heard in open court. As in all the previous shoot-to-kill cases since 1982, and more than 200 other controversial shootings during the past 20 years, lies and cover-ups have been the order of the day. The RUC men charged with the murder of six unarmed republicans in Co. Armagh were all acquitted on the grounds that they had fired thinking their lives were in danger. After a lot of pressure, the government agreed to an enquiry headed by John Stalker into the controversial shootings. When he was on the verge of re-commending the suspension of senior officers, and openly spoke out on the non-co-operation he was receiving from John Hermon, head of the RUC, he was removed from the enquiry on a trumped up charge, with the repercussions and the controversy surrounding it coming back to haunt the government, time and time again.

Mr. Brooke has turned down any suggestion of an independant inquiry, and leaves it to the inquest to determine the facts. Again, unlike England and Wales, no formal verdicts can be returned, and the facts can be well hidden behind the issuing of a Public Immunity Certificate which limits the area of questioning on security grounds. This was very apparent in the inquest into the Gibraltar killings when the vast majority of questions put to the SAS were not answered on the grounds of security.

Silent Vigil And Protest Rally

A silent vigil was held two days after the murders, with people carrying black flags and placards calling for an end to the shoot-to-kill policy.

On Sunday 21st January, a rally was organised by the Community for Justice Group at the site of the killings, to protest against the murders. Amongst the speakers was Fr. Des Wilson who rightly pointed out that: "**Only the Irish people have the right to try our citizens, no British soldier or British government have that right, therefore, we must do everything we can to end the tyranny by asking them to leave now and bring its killers with them.**" He went on to attack the Catholic hierarchy who had failed to defend its own people: "**In 1968 we were given strict instructions never to support the Civil Rights Movement and this came from the top of the Catholic hierarchy. Today we need to put pressure on Church leaders to support the people and they clearly do not represent the people at present.**" Other speakers included Gerry Adams M.P., and two relatives of shoot-to-kill victims from Co. Armagh, Mrs. Carroll and Mrs. Kerr.

The need for an independant public enquiry to examine all the facts leading up to Saturday's shooting is crucial. So is the need to take one of the shoot-to-kill cases to the European Court of Human Rights, where Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights specifies that force used, must be no more than is "**absolutely necessary**". This totally differs from Britain's law which states "**a person may use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances.**" Reasonable being interpreted in the courts here in the six counties, as a licence to kill without mercy.

While there is an immediate need for a Public Enquiry, we can only echo Des Wilson's statement, that only Irish people have the right to judge Irish citizens. So long as the British occupy our country, such events will continue to occur.

Kate Doyle

I.R.S.P. Support Group Activities

Irish Republican Socialist Committee (North America)

The Irish Republican Socialist Committee's (I.R.S.C.) North American Co-ordinator, Peter Urban, has been a target for harassment over the past few months, following his involvement along with other comrades in the San Francisco committee, in the Peace and Freedom Party elections in June 1988.

The Peace and Freedom Party is a broad electoral coalition of the left, founded in 1968, and maintained to permit ballot status to a variety of activists. Revolutionary socialists managed to overturn the previous reformist leadership headed by the Communist Party. As a result, the C.P. turned to the bourgeois State for assistance in regaining its previous position of power. Peter Urban was then arrested and charged with perjury, voter fraud and filing a false affadavit of candidacy. The first two charges were subsequently dropped but despite protesting his innocence, he was given one year probation, fined $700 and a 30 day jail term imposed (or participation in a work programme) on the third charge.

During this time, the FBI put out a false allegation that Christina Reid from the San Francisco Bay area, who had been charged along with others in connection with allegedly attempting to procure an anti-aircraft missile system, was a member of the I.R.S.P., even though it was public knowledge that she had never supported or belonged to an IRSP support group. Fears were compounded when Urban's job was terminated with less than a days notice and then he was pulled out of a sheriff's work programme and thrown into jail to serve 30 days.

The I.R.S.C. (North America) condemn this systematic state harassment and denounce those who claiming to be socialists, have aided the agents of the bourgeoisie in attacking a leading member of the I.R.S.C.

Slide Show

In conjunction with comrades in Regina, Canada a slide show presentation is being prepared which will be shown on December 8th to commemorate the founding of the I.R.S.P.

The Irish Republican Socialist Support Committee (N. America) joins in a demonstration against American intervention in El Salvador.

The Right To Choose

Over the course of the last several months, protests in defence of a women's right to choose have taken place in the San Francisco area. On October 15th, the I.R.S.C. endorsed and participated in a march and rally called by the National Organisation of Women which drew 60,000 people, by far the largest demonstration in San Francisco for several years. The need for women to mobilise in self-defence against right wing attacks on abortion rights is clearly becoming the catylist for revitalising the left. The I.R.S.C.'s consistent action on this issue clearly won respect from the other activists there, and sales of badges, books and pamphlets on the Irish struggle were the highest in some time.

El Salvador

Several protests in support of the FMLN offensive and against U.S. intervention in El Salvador have taken place in the San Francisco area, supported by comrades in the I.R.S.C.

I.R.S.C.
2057 15th Street
Suite B
San Francisco
CA. 94114., U.S.A.

Republican Socialist Prisoners Aid

On April 25th 1990, Irishman Nick Mullen will stand trial on charges of conspiring to cause explosions. This trial will be the first case in Britain since the Guildford Four were released, which involves an Irish man accused of political offences. Mullen was arrested at Gatwick airport after being deported at gunpoint from Zimbabwe at the behest of the British government. His arrest followed the discovery of an amount of Semtex explosive and a quantity of automatic rifles in a South London flat last December.

After being held for seven days under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, illegally, according to the European Court of Human Rights, Mullen was charged and produced at Lambeth Magistrates Court amidst the usual "security" circus involving the use of a helicopter, armoured vehicles and those darlings of the media - the blue berets, all of which appeared on national television news. Clearly the purpose of this was to give the impression that a top "player" had been apprehended.

Shortly after Mullen had been charged, articles appeared in certain sections of the Press which effectively declared him guilty before even standing trial. An example of this (and by no means the only one) was a piece by Chester Stern in the *'Mail on Sunday'* which depicted Mullen's house in Zimbabwe under the caption **'intended as an IRA safe house.'** The article stated that a man **"who cannot be named because he is facing terror charges"** was involved in a whole list of criminal acts including providing safe houses for terrorists, and went on to suggest that he was party to a plot to execute Thatcher during her planned visit to Harare. The headline was **'IRA had hideaway on Maggies route.'** This article appeared despite the fact that reporting restrictions had not been lifted. Mullen's solicitor has complained to the Press Council and the Attorney General has found the *'Mail on Sunday'* in contempt of court but has decided not to take any action.

The behaviour of the media shows disturbing parallels with the Guildford Four, Birmingham Six and Winchester Three cases, and the Press hysteria which was whipped up at those times. In a letter from Brixton Prison and printed in *'The Guardian'*, Mullen states **"I would not be surprised if an over-zealous policeman were to think that the climate was such that, giving the facts a helping hand was acceptable behaviour."**

Clearly the release of the Guildford Four has not deterred journalists from accepting unquestioningly police and state accounts in cases concerning Irish people accused of political offences. Five Irish men arrested in a dawn raid last month in Cheltenham were depicted by the *'Daily Express'* on the front page as **'Thatcher bomb gang arrested'**, on the following day other papers followed suit. The five were released without charge and have been forced to return to Ireland, their living destroyed. Last May, the McDonagh brothers who lived in Stoke were arrested under the PTA and held for 60 hours before being released without charge. Their arrest was reported in some newspapers as being **"against the Tern Hill bombers."** Interviews were published with friends of the **"Tern Hill Barracks bombing suspects."** The McDonagh brothers have also been forced to return to Ireland, their lives destroyed.

If Nick Mullen is convicted at his planned show trial, he will have been convicted by a legal system that responds to the needs of the state and also by the actions of journalists, who prostitute truth and themselves in order to meet the needs of their employers. For further information please contact: **Nick Mullen Defence Campaign, 265 Seven Sisters Road, London, N4.**

Victimisation Of Peter Jordan Continues

The Home Office vendetta waged against 65 year old Republican Socialist POW Peter Jordan has continued at Full Sutton prison, where he was forcibly transferred after being assaulted by a squad of six prison warders at Long Lartin. Although no physical violence has yet been used against Jordan at Full Sutton, the Home Office appears intent on depriving him of the few rights left to him.

Apart from Frankland, Full Sutton is the most distant top security prison from his family, who live in the Bristol area. The Home Office seem to have borne this in mind when they transferred him and this can only be seen as an attempt to lower his morale and isolate him further.

Since the transfer, Jordan has refused to issue visiting orders to family members on the grounds that he doesn't wish to force them to make a 500 mile round trip for a short visit lasting two hours. His mother, aged 87, cannot possibly travel such a distance due to age and the effects of a fall in 1989. The Home Office were aware of this when they transferred him to Full Sutton.

To counter this Jordan made an application for accumulated visits to take place at a prison nearer home. This application was made last August. Several months went by and he received no answer. By comparison Billy Power, one of the Birmingham 6 and a Category A prisoner at that time, made an identical application going so far as to stipulate which prison he wished to be sent to and this was processed quickly and favourably.

Jordan finally received a letter from the Home Office informing him that his application had been refused because he was not entitled to accumulated visits - confirmation that Jordan was being singled out for special treatment. The refusal on those grounds was a blatant lie.

Jordan then saw the governor of Full Sutton who agreed that he was entitled to these visits and Jordan told him that if the matter was not resolved by November 6th he had no other recourse but to embark on hunger strike.

Republican Socialist Prisoners Aid was informed of this decision by Jordan's sister and we pledged full support for any course of action he decided on. We then made immediate representations to the Home Office Category A Section and voiced our concern that through their actions they had created a situation which could result in tragedy. We made it clear that we fully supported Jordan's proposed hunger strike and would hold them responsible if his health was affected due to their vindictive intransigence. We then gave an undertaking to avert the hunger strike if they made a positive response to Jordan's application.

On November 4th, two days before the hunger strike was due to commence, a spokesperson from the Home Office contacted RSPA and told us that Jordan would **"meet with a positive response to his application and would receive it within a week."** Accordingly we notified his family of this decision and the hunger strike was averted. Needless to say the Home Office reneged on this and negotiations resumed. He finally received the notice on November 16th. Even then the Home Office prevaricated and it wasn't until December 16th that we finally secured a temporary transfer to Horfield Prison in Bristol. As a result he was able to enjoy visits from his mother and family for the first time in six months.

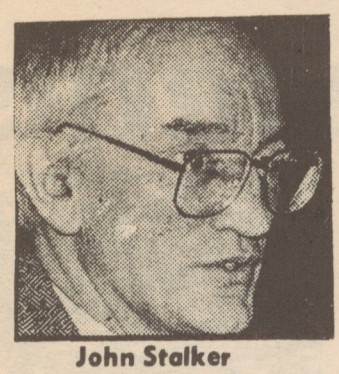
With the aid of his solicitor, Ms Fiona Borrill, RSPA is investigating the possibilities of a judicial review into the assault in Long Lartin. Since that time the governor of Long Lartin has been replaced and the Head of Custody in a letter to Mrs. Peggy Walker, Jordan's sister, has claimed that the assault was Jordan's fault because **"he didn't help himself."**

In the meantime, despite the Home Office's admission that he **"poses no physical threat to security"**, Jordan remains a Category A prisoner subjected to daily vilification and intimidation. We have learned today that Jordan's mother, sister and brother-in-law, on their last visit to him at Horfield prison, Bristol, had their visit curtailed after 10 minutes because he pointed out a warder who had threatened him with physical violence the day before.

Republican Socialist Prisoners Aid takes this opportunity to salute the courage of Peter Jordan. He is an inspiration to all supporters of the struggle for national liberation and socialism in Ireland. Letters of support for Peter should be addressed to: **Peter Jordan (H22338), HMP Full Sutton, York YO4 1PS.**

James O'Brien
Republican Socialist Prisoners Aid.

War Of Words



John Stalker

Sir John Hermon

They say that there's no honour among thieves, it would seem that this would be equally applicable to peelers. Since the collapse of the Taylor trial, a war of words has erupted between John Stalker and John Hermon (former Chief Constable of the R.U.C.) over documents that Stalker has in his possession which he says, points to the decision to have him removed from the shoot-to-kill enquiry "**as having been made at a level above that of police-chief. It was most certainly made at cabinet level.**"

Stalker's allegations came soon after the dramatic folding of the trial in its 16th week involving businessman Kevin Taylor a long time friend of Stalker, and three associates on charges of fraud. The prosecution submitted that detectives had misled a judge when they won an order allowing access to Taylor's bank accounts.

Mr. Stalker was due to give evidence on Mr. Taylor's behalf the following week and he declared that the timely collapse of the trial had saved "embarrassment" at high-level in the Greater Manchester police-force as the judge would have called Chief Constable James Anderton "**to do some explaining.**"

It was obvious that Kevin Taylor's friendship with John Stalker, Taylor's subsequent arrest and charges of fraud, were done as a means to discredit Stalker, at a time when his investigations into the R.U.C. were being met with increased hostility and non co-operation from John Hermon and Trevor Forbes, head of the Special Branch. Stalker was about to recommend the suspension of a number of senior RUC officers, when he was conveniently suspended from duty and then removed from the enquiry. He was replaced by Colin Sampson who was co-incidentally leading the investigation into Stalker. Stalker was subsequently cleared by the Manchester Police Authority and reinstated, but his character had already been blackened and he chose to resign in January, 1987.

These new revelations relate to notes from Hermon's personal engagement diary which were disclosed to lawyers representing Private Eye, who were being sued for libel by Hermon.

The notes cover the period between May 16th and May 30th. The decision to remove Stalker was supposed to have taken place at a meeting on May 19th, 1986 with no civil servant or member of the government present. In Hermon's notes made on May 18th, one day prior to the said meeting, he refers to Sir Philip Myers saying "**CC has seen BS.RA and TK and DH was au fait with development.**" (there seems to be a consensus that CC refers to Colin Sampson, BS to Barry Shaw D.P.P. for N. Ireland, TK to Tom King, RA to Sir Robert Andrews, permanent Under-Secretary at the N.I.O. and DH to Douglas Hurd.

Another entry dated May 30th, two days after Stalker had been given indefinite leave, refers to a telephone conversation between Hermon and RA (Sir Robert Andrews) about a meeting held earlier on an unspecified date between RA.CS and PM (Philip Myers) and which says "**I expressed concern about structure of inquiry. Clearly collusion between PM.RA.CS and DPP. I must hold the line.**"

Hermon clearly embarrassed with these disclosures has vehemently denied there was any conspiracy involved in Stalker's removal. The word collusion, according to Hermon, was an unfortunate word to use, he really meant discussion or consultation. Well really, Sir John, there is a vast difference in meaning between collusion (implying conspiracy) and consultation, hardly a slip of the pen!

Stalker has meanwhile handed over the relevant documents to David Waddington, the Home Secretary, who in turn has dismissed them as not pointing to any conspiracy, and refused to set up any independent enquiry.

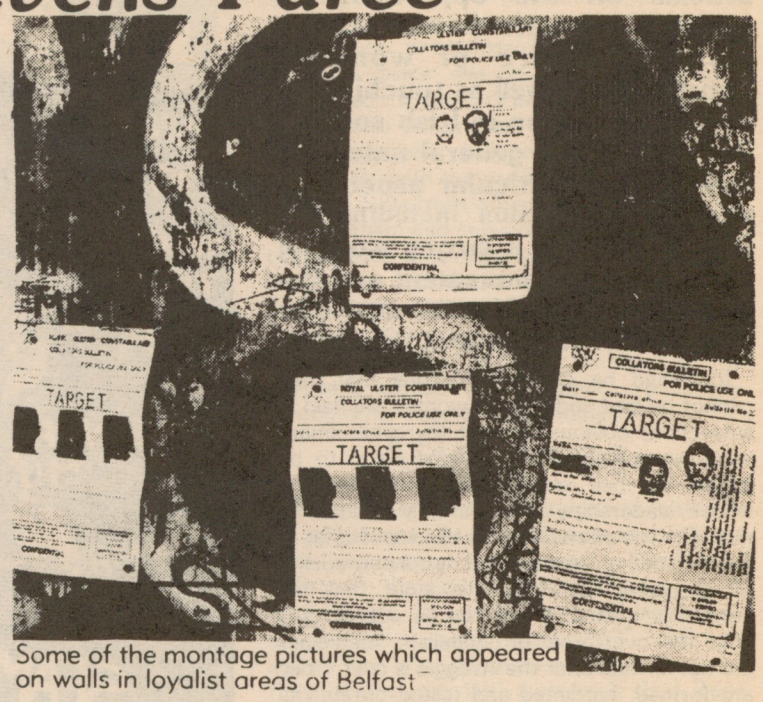
The Stevens Farce

Meanwhile back in inquiry land, the ongoing Stevens inquiry into the active collaboration of fascists within the 'security forces' and Loyalist death squads continues.

Since his arrival in September, the Cambridgeshire copper has managed to charge 28 people with various offences, ranging from possession of ammunition to possession of information. Some of those charged are 'former' members of the U.D.R. However, with the exception of standing on a few toes in the initial stages, e.g. the publicity surrounding the swoop on serving U.D.R. men and the inconveniencing of senior U.D.A. personnel being detained, to date no break-through has been made in stemming the flow of information. **To date no R.U.C. officers have been charged.**

In fact it would appear that the U.D.A. have, after initial hiccups, been able to sort out the irritant of the Stevens inquiry team. They have been boasting through newspapers of being tipped off well in advance about forthcoming arrests. Then on the 12th of January a 'mysterious' fire completely gutted the Carrick-fergus headquarters of the inquiry team, destroying all the data collected.

What might prove to be more than an irritant, is the revelation that one of the men charged with possession of documents, UDA intelligence officer Brian Nelson, claims to have been working for British military intelligence. True to form, his wife and family were whisked away into protective custody while Brian is being accommodated in the former 'supergrass' wing in Crumlin Road jail. UDA sources claim that Brian often boasted of having a British army intelligence contact in Hollywood Barracks, who regularly passed him information.



Some of the montage pictures which appeared on walls in loyalist areas of Belfast

If Nelson was a military intelligence agent, then it would mean that the British army and consequently the government were well aware of the extent of 'security force' collusion with the UDA, well before the start of the Stevens enquiry. More importantly, it would mean that the passing of information and the targetting of individuals to be murdered was directly under the control of the British government.

If Nelson so chooses, he is in a position to blow the whistle on the extent of collusion that exists between the UDA and the British. This will of course be prevented at all costs, with deals being done behind closed doors. The Irish working class are fed up to the teeth with enquiries, controlled and manipulated by the British government, in an attempt to put on a democratic face.

Despite all the attempts by the British with its armoury of informers, assassination squads, repressive legislation etc., this will not stop the onward drive by the Irish people to national liberation and socialism.

Kate Doyle

Women's Centre Under Attack

The I.R.S.P. in a statement totally condemning the withdrawal of vital funding from the Falls Women's Centre by Belfast City Council last month stated that "**This is one more example of the council's downright bigotry and blatant contempt with which they hold the nationalist people of West Belfast. For an area as deprived as this, an area which desperately needs such facilities as those provided by the Falls Women's Centre - a creche, advice centre, drop-in centre, as well as classes on such topics as welfare rights and women's health, the with-holding of this funding, to the only centre of its kind in this area, will have a devastating effect.**

In a tied vote caused by Seamus Lynch of the Workers Party abstaining, the Lord Mayor, supposedly the representative of the whole of the people of Belfast, used his casting vote against funding for the Falls Women's Centre.

Since that decision was taken, women's groups from both protestant and catholic areas including Carrick Hill, North Street, Shankill Road, Ballybeen, Cregagh, Ballynafeigh, Lower Ormeau, Queen's University, the Northern Ireland Women's Rights Movement and other organisations such as NUPE, the Workers Education Association and the Women's Education Project, have all pledged their support to the Falls Women's Centre in their campaign to force the council to reverse its decision.

At a press conference held on the 18th of January, a statement was read out on behalf of the above organisations. In it they attacked "**the blatant sectarianism**" of the council's decision. The statement went on to say "**Despite the courage and honest stand of councillors Liz Seawright, Dorothy Dunlop, John Carson and Hugh Smyth who refused to be swayed by unsubstantiated sectarian smears directed at the Falls Women's Centre, bigotry and unfounded allegations were the basis on which the small majority of council representatives voted.**"

"**In supporting the Falls Women's Centre, we are emphasising our commitment to protecting the work of all independent women's centres and organisations and declaring our refusal to allow those services to be impeded or axed by either sectarianism, sexism or ignorance**".

Oonagh Marron, co-ordinator of the Centre voiced her fears that the Centre was under real threat of closure, already it has had to cut back on some of the services offered. Eleven jobs are also on the line in an area "**where women are increasingly forced to take the burden of the daily hardships of poverty, debt, bad housing and ill health.**"

A petition in support of the Centre is being circulated and will be presented to the council in the near future. An open invitation has also been extended to councillors to come and visit the Centre for themselves and view the work carried out there. Another possible avenue being considered is legal action against the Council.

Waterford Glass-Deception

Since the takeover in 1984 by a multi-national corporation, Waterford Glass, once one of the most profitable industries in Ireland, has seen a massive decline in profits, wholesale redundancies, cuts in wages and redeployment of the work force.

Three weeks ago, Waterford Glass's chief executive, Paddy Galvin announced that unless the workforce accepted a package of "rationalisation" including wage cuts and the redeployment of cutters, the company would collapse.

In 1987, faced with declining profits, management pushed through a plan of voluntary redundancies to the tune of 1,200 workers, modernised the plant and predicted profits of £32 million for 1988.

1988 saw no profit. Through total mismanagement, the consequence of mass redundancies had meant a drastic reduction in the skilled workforce (blowing craft). Orders to the value of £30 million were lost because of the simple lack of the necessary skilled workforce.

Now at the start of 1990, the work force is facing a new onslaught. The ATGWU's initial response was one of disbelief at the company's financial position. They have demanded that Dr. Bryer, who was one of three financial advisors who had previously looked at the company's books at the Union's request in 1987, has access to the financial accounts.

The management refused and the workforce responded with two unofficial stoppages in consecutive weeks. The whole matter went to the Labour Court for arbitration. A compromise was reached, whereby the Labour Court would pass on the relevant financial information to Dr. Bryer. The ATGWU have rejected the cuts and are awaiting the results of Dr. Bryer's findings.

There have been rumours floating of a possible change in ownership. If this is the case, this cost cutting exercise with the workers bearing the brunt, could be the sugar coating to make investment more attractive to prospective buyers.

The extreme reluctance of the management to allow access to the accounts, naturally reinforces the union's claim that all is not as it should be. Waterford Glass is a very desirable commodity throughout the world. The question of there not being a market does not arise. The mismanagement directly affects not just the workforce but also the community as a whole. The ATGWU must not only stand firm against the onslaught on wage levels and work practices, but also insist on the total exposure of the ineptitude or worse, of the present management. Any further compromises will amount to betrayal.

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The Historical Roots Of Women's Oppression

This is the first of a series of articles on the oppression of women. In this article we trace the historic nature of women's oppression as well as touching on women's position in Irish society. Because of the general nature of this article, particular aspects of women's oppression including the failure to build a strong working class women's movement and the whole question of feminism, will be analysed in subsequent issues.

It should be glaringly obvious that men cannot be free and equal if women are held in subjection; obvious at least to revolutionary movements, whose leaderships claim to be guided by their socio-political analysis - yet whose leaderships are invariably headed by men. Far too often there is a blind spot as far as the question of "womenkind" is concerned. It is of absolutely no value to state that the "woman's question" will not be solved until after the overthrow of capitalism. Ideologies are not formed after the struggle is over - they are formed, hardened and tested during the struggle.

Looking at what passes for the representatives of the working class either here in Ireland or further afield, it is not hard to see why many women are sceptical of "working-class movements" in general. Yet a divided working class is a weak working class, and the sexual division is perhaps the most fundamental since it is very much an ingrained phenomenon.

To have some idea of why male domination became the norm, it is necessary to examine the development of the concept of women's role in society as we know it today, and the functions of the family.

Historical Roots

There is evidence that in pre-private property times, there existed matriarchal (ruled by an elder female) extended families. The communal lifestyle involved in this period meant that running the household was not seen as a "second class" occupation. It was public, socially necessary work, equally as important as the provision of food by the hunters. There was no question of one sex being dominant. However with the development of private property, there gradually emerged a change in the form, make up and significance of the family, and consequently a change in the status of women.

In Ireland the clan system, with its Brehon laws giving women a remarkable degree of equality, lasted much longer than in most other European countries. It was destroyed by successive English invasions and plantations, and the subsequent adoption of feudal values and lifestyle.

The home became one of the objects of private property acquired by the man, and consequently the "manager of the household" became someone or something private and hidden. Women were contained in the object of the house. They became the means not just of propagating the species but of providing an heir (male) to whom the property would be passed on.

Paternity had to be certain, so extra marital sex for the woman was forbidden with dire consequences for those who broke the rules. Chastity and the security of property went hand in hand. Organised religion reinforced this belief. The male was allowed his "wild oats" of course, with no threat to his lineage from any illegitimate children he was responsible for.

As private property became more refined and all encompassing, the role of women in everyday life became more refined into a passive one, loving, honouring and obeying the lord and master of the household, bearing his children and being his ornament. The economic world revolved around men, and the family became the basic economic and social unit, which inculcated the proper social values into each new generation.

Naturally all this applies to those with property. What about the people of no property? This aspect did not lead to any kind of better lot for women. Serfs in feudal times led harsh brutish lives with a short life expectancy. The household as a unit had to provide its own clothing, food, etc. at the same time being no more than the cattle of their master. Women were totally the slaves of slaves.

Changing economic circumstances did nothing to improve that situation. There were instances in medieval times of women (usually on an individual basis) joining heretical religious sects as an emotional and intellectual outlet, but this had nothing to do with the poorer classes. It was regarded as shamelessness and insubordination. A proclamation of 1547

forbade the women of London "to meet together to babble and talk" and ordered their husbands to keep their wives in their houses.

The emergence of the trading and commerce class (the bourgeoisie) and their seizure of power from the aristocracy in the Cromwellian revolution did not bring any change in the situation of women. There were sects (relatively small) with very progressive ideas about society in general - "the Levellers" and "Diggers" for example - but their influence was negligible and soon non-existent in the face of Puritanism.

With the development of industry, the working class and urbanisation, came even greater hardship for those at the bottom of the heap. The "slaves of the slaves" again bore the brunt. Working class women were often at the forefront of food riots. This was born out of desperation and the fact that the militias were less likely to open fire on women, rather than any new-found realisation of equality by men.

With every refinement of the division of labour, women found themselves either in a place where they were powerless (i.e.the ornaments of the bourgeois man) or in a place where they were more severely exploited. In fact the middle class observers of morality complained of the break-up of the family unit as both women and children were forced to work to survive. The factory reformers, while attempting to alleviate working conditions for women (and children), often did so from the point of view that the woman's place was naturally in the home and the position and strength of the family as a basic unit had to be maintained. They were also in competition with men for jobs, a fact which has caused much division and acrimony in the working class, chiefly due to women being cheaper working machines then men.

Outside the working class, the question of the liberation of women came much more to the fore. Women began to protest (usually on an individual basis) against their oppression. One of the most notable was Mary Wollstoncraft, an admirer of the French Revolution, who advocated among other things, the co-education of male and female children. She made an attempt to show men how the continual oppression of women was not something "natural" but rather a result of upbringing and indoctrination. Ironically she died in 1797 in childbirth. She was one of the first to whom the adjective "feminist" would be applied. She saw the tyranny of men to be the problem and one which could only be solved by reasonable appeal: **"Would men generously swap our chains and be content with national fellowship instead of slavish obedience."** Certain trends within feminism which simply lay the blame for the oppression of women at the feet of men, continue to the present day.

Competitive System

In fairness to Mary Wollstoncraft, it must be said that the equation of the capitalist system with the oppression of both women and men had not at that time been clarified. It was not until the development of the Owenite utopian co-operatives in the early 1800's and Cork man William Thompson's theories on the nature of exploitation that the link between the emancipation of women and a non-competitive society was made.

In Robert Owen's co-operatives the work of the home was equally divided between men and women. It was seen as public, socially necessary work. Thompson (who developed an early theory of surplus value) wrote in 1825 on the subject of women's emancipation from a point of view that was well before its time. He pointed out the crux of the problem when he stated that even if given equal political and civil rights, women would not gain **"equality of happiness because unequal powers under free competition must produce unequal effect."**

Thompson also wondered at the bewilderment of radical men when women showed little enthusiasm for their "high matters of liberty" - a bewilderment which certainly has not disappeared. The unity of the working class struggle and the women's struggle was clear to Thompson. It was also clear to Frenchwoman Flora Trepan. On a speaking tour in 1844 to promote a Workers' International she declared **"I have nearly the whole world against me, men, because I demand the emancipation of women, the owners because I demand the emancipation of wage earners."**

The Communist Manifesto in 1848 pointed to the hysterical claims of the middle classes that women would be "held in common" in a communist society: **"The bourgeois sees in his wife a mere instrument of production. He hears that the instruments of production are to be exploited in common, and, naturally, can come to no other conclusion that the lot of being common to all will likewise fall to the women. He has not even a suspicion that the real point aimed at is to do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production."** The connection between social revolution and the liberation of women had been made. Women who understood this were almost invariably in conflict with the purely feminist movement, which was middle class in origin and outlook, and opposed to the rights of labour.

Feminists - those who regarded men as the problem - continued in their single-minded struggle for emancipation; ie. the right to vote, to sit in Parliament and thus be the equal of men in the exploitative system. In the early 20th century they were epitomised by the Pankhursts and the women's suffrage movement, (Sylvia Pankhurst being the exception. She organised working class women in the East End of London).

Their attitude was shown clearly in a series of articles written in 1912 by Christabel Pankhurst for her newspaper "The Suffragette". In them she described how men had abandoned the knightly ideals of parity and self restraint, and allowed society to be destroyed through the ravages of venereal disease! She reckoned that 80% of the male population was infected and this was the cause of infant mortality and female sterility. Obviously poverty and deprivation did not figure in her calculations. She later described the First World War as "God's vengeance upon the people who held women in subjection."

Charlotte Despard (who has been described as a suffragette, socialist and Sinn Feiner) was involved in the same struggle, but detested this type of attitude: **"I am not a feminist - indeed I hate the very word. It is my earnest hope that the present women's movement will prove to be a passing phase and that the day is not long distant when it will merge with the men's movement."**

The Church

The present day situation in Ireland cannot be adequately looked at without a brief look at the role of the Church in perpetuating the inferior status of women. This is not confined to any particular section of Christianity, but catholicism is by far the most intransigent of the mainstream denominations.

Apart from the all pervasive masculine nature of christianity - god; apostles, the evangelists, the pope down to the curate, there is a certain schizophrenia as regards women. They are seen as being in the image of Eve - weak, succumbing to temptation and the cause of mankind being chucked out of Paradise, or

of Mary, the mother of Christ, the pure, the passive, the cornerstone of the home. While the former view of women may not be so prominent in present times, the Mary image is as strong today as it ever was. Naturally it reflects the values of the capitalist system, the ruling system which sees the family as the basic unit of society. The implacable opposition of the catholic church to the idea of women priests clearly shows the reactionary nature of the church hierarchy.

Ironically it is women who are the more conscientious church goers, the more diligent practitioners of the Faith, and of course with the family structure as it is, this is passed on to the children from a very early age.

The essence of religion is the promise of a better existence in "the next world." Whereas the man can find shelter in the home from the harsh realities of life, the woman has no comparable shelter to retreat into except the cosy worn promises provided by the Church. At present there certainly is no alternative in the real world which can be attained and not much sign of the male dominated society attempting even to understand that women suffer from the harsh realities of life more so than ever.

In theory, these days the Catholic Church has come round to conceding the right of women to enjoy the sexual act. In practice, by forbidding contraception and abortion, there can be no enjoyment without worry. Sex is for bringing children into the world, full stop, and while the Church approves of the "safe period", Billings method, or the like, this is no more than the sexual version of Russian roulette. This attitude denies women the right to be full human beings with natural sexual needs. It also ensures that women stay in their "natural habitat" - the home - looking after the family, not doing "unnatural" things like having a job.

The 26 county government is willingly shackled to Catholic Church social doctrine. It is perfectly understandable that the slightly more liberal Protestant Churches should object to being attached to such a system. However, while voicing justifiable apprehensions, the practice of the DUP (totally dominated by Free Presbyterianism) would tend to throw a different light on matters. Recently in Derry, the Council voted to give a grant to help SPUC (the right wing anti-abortionist lobby) set up a branch in the city. The motion was put forward by the DUP and carried with Sinn Fein abstaining.

The so-called liberalism of the Protestant Churches must be seen in the context that Christian denominations in general have the same basic attitude towards women, and whereas some might attempt to stem participation of women, it is done merely as a rearguard action - the alternative is to lose support, credibility and ultimately power over society. Naturally the materialist view is that religion is an illusory escape from the grind of reality, but it exists, and in Ireland it is powerful and therefore cannot be simply swept under the carpet and ignored.

The National Question

In Ireland the women's struggle has been inextricably linked with the national question, a situation which has produced many difficulties and divisions.

1876 saw the formation in Dublin of the Irish Suffrage Society by two Quakers, Anna and Thomas Haslam. It had little influence and was not involved in the major struggle which was about to seriously involve women, the Land League. As in the case of food riots in England a century earlier, women were not involved through any notion of equality, but simply because the men involved were being immediately arrested or were on the run.

The general reaction across the political spectrum was predictable. In Dublin, Archbishop McCabe raged against those women who were prepared to **"forget the modesty of their sex and the high dignity of womanhood"** by parading themselves **"before the public gaze in a character unworthy of a child of Mary."** The Protestant Belfast Newsletter viewed the events no differently, condemning the **"distasteful spectacle of women making a harangue from a public platform."** It went on; **"sensible people in the North of Ireland dislike to see woman out of the place she is gifted to occupy, and at no time is woman further from her natural position than when she appears upon a political platform."** It is a good example of reactionaries being of the same mind.

The Ladies Land League was highly successful, a factor which contributed to their enforced dissolution with the release of the prisoners and the retaking of the reins by the men. For the next twenty years there was no group of women activists. Not until the formation in 1900 of Inghinidhe na hEireann did women figure in Irish politics. The bitterness and dissillusion of the Ladies Land League was still felt. There was no scope for activity inside male dominated organisations.

Inghinidhe na hEireann

The Inghinidhe na hEireann (Daughters of Ireland) involved some of the best known women in Irish history; Maud Gonne (MacBride), a founding member, and later Countess Markievicz. Although they were almost totally of middle class backgrounds, they became very involved in the social struggle of the working class and working class women in particular. They attempted to bring the question of prostitution into the open and were influenced by Connolly.

At the time of its formation, it was involved in many anti-recruitment drives (the Boer War was in progress) and their militant nationalism was a dominating feature of their political outlook. They produced the first women's paper *Bean na hEireann* (Woman of Ireland) in November 1908. it advocated **"militancy, separatism and feminism."**

Inghinidhe na hEireann's uncompromising nationalism led it to unequivocally condemn the suffrage movement which ignored the national question and gave tacit acceptance to British rule. The suffrage movement wanted to ensure that any British laws which were to the betterment of women's lives were extended to Ireland. Again the contradictions and conflicts of interest between feminism and other ideologies eg. feminism in the context of progressive nationalism and very importantly, feminism in the context of revolutionary socialism, have not disappeared.

The underlying aim of Inghinidhe na hEireann was to form a strong visible presence which would ensure political rights for women in a situation of Irish Independence. Their simultaneous involvement in separatist movements such as the Gaelic League and Sinn Fein and their support for the Irish Republican Brotherhood was a complementary part of that strategy. With the gradual demise of Inghinidhe na hEireann as a viable autonomous political entity, the remainder of the activists joined with Connolly's Irish Citizen Army or the new nationalist women's organisation, Cumann na mBan.

Cumann na mBan

The latter was formed in April 1914, both as a sop to women who wished to be involved in the national struggle, and a formalised back up service to the Irish volunteers. Of course this did not give women any autonomous voice in the arena of nationalist politics, it merely duplicated the differentiation of sex roles in society as a whole.

The attitudes which came to the fore during the 1916 rising are worth noting, particularly that of Eamon De Valera. He was adamant in refusing to have any participation by women in Boland's Mill where he was in command. Other Cumann na mBann members who managed to take up the role they were trained for, found themselves always well sheltered as they looked after the wounded and the feeding of the Volunteers. While far from perfect, the situation of the women members of the Irish Citizen Army was more egalitarian (if more dangerous). There had been much less segregation during training and all were armed at the time of the rising. A few were noted snipers.

With the defeat of the rebellion and the gradual emergence of the guerrilla war after 1919, women became indispensible, both as back-up, couriers and gatherers of intelligence. Countess Markievicz won a seat in the 1919 election which saw a landslide of victories for militant Irish nationalism, and was Minister for Labour in the 1919 Dail. In local elections between January and June 1920, women were encouraged to stand. Once again this was because the political men were "on the run." Despite the participation of many women, the political decision-making was still in the hands of men.

With the signing of the treaty and the division of Free State and Republican forces. Cumann na mBan unequivocally aligned itself with the republican ideal. They were the first nationalist organisation to reject the Treaty. It also shackled itself to the belief that the quest for the "Republic" took precedence over all other

considerations, including the question of women's position in that sovereign nation. In other words there should be no sidetracking from the main issue. This is not intended to detract from their undoubted militancy and fearless actions at this time. It is also interesting to note how (before the outbreak of hostilities) the demand for voting rights for women over 21 in accordance with the 1916 Proclamation was totally opposed by those in favour of the Treaty and vice-versa.

At a time when the Free State had over 12,000 people in prison, 400 were women. Some were wounded by gun fire by their captors, who treated them savagely if they mounted any kind of protest. With the ending of the Civil War, an election was held in which, for the first time, women over the age of 21 could vote. The Free State government felt it was in an unassailable position. Soon the republican remnants were split with the formation of Fianna Fail. The split affected Cumann na mBan as several leading members followed De Valera, despite his obvious paternalistic attitude towards women, Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, briefly in the Fianna Fail ranks, compared the attitudes of Connolly and De Valera: **"To the one, woman was an equal, a comrade; to the other, a sheltered being, withdrawn to the domestic hearth, shrinking from public life."**

For those aligned with the republican ideal, the inactivity of the IRA meant that the reasons for the existence of Cumann na mBan were not there. In the early 1930's quite a few members, on an individual basis, joined Saor Eire, a quite radical movement with socialist policies. Many others took an opposite view, notably Mary MacSwiney, sister of Terence MacSwiney who objected to Saor Eire because it **"sought to divide the people of Ireland on a class basis."** (Mary kidnapped her niece in 1932 on the grounds that her sister-in-law Muriel, wife of Terence, was a communist, an atheist and therefore an unfit mother. A court order was made, giving Mary legal custody).

A successful Red scare was engendered by both Church and State which resulted in the banning in October 1931 of 12 organisations, including the IRA, Saor Eire, Cumann na mBan, the Women's Prisoners' Defence League, the Revolutionary Workers Group and the Friends of Soviet Russia. There was total censorship of the press so it was difficult to publicise the fact that the women continued to defy, despite many arrests, the draconian measures imposed on them. Charlotte Despard and Maud Gonne MacBride were singled out by the Minister for Justice, Fitzgerald-Kenny: **"We are going to put people like these in prison, and if they persist, and if it is necessary, we are going to execute them."** Such was the hysteria, that any politically active woman was automatically reviled as a Bolshevik, (the nastiest people in the world at that time of rising fascism/nazism).

It is not constructive to deal in "what ifs" but once again it is obvious that the partition of Ireland allowed the unchallenged adoption of Catholic social doctrine and all that that entails for the status of women. It is true that the other Christian denominations do not have any better an attitude towards women, but a stronger fight for secularism would surely have ensued in the debates over the 1937 constitution, De Valera's Labour of Love.

The legal position of women as regards rights to work and political status was dubious to say the least. A particular cause of concern was the economic aspect - the right to work. The women's cause was not helped by the head of the Irish Women Workers' Union, Louie Bennett, who viewed women going to work as an unfortunate necessity. For Cumann na mBan, the constitutional question was outside the realms of the 1916 proclamation, therefore not to be taken under their notice. In fact the constitution, in attempting to ensure that the woman's place was in the home, greatly resembled the ideals of fascism in this respect. De Valera's paternalism was not opposed in any organised fashion, but rather by individuals, with the predictable lack of effect.

There have been other pointers to both the conservatism and anti-women nature of the 26 county state - one of the most notable being the furore over the Mother and Child Act in the early 1950's. Here the mere mention of assistance to unmarried mothers was enough to have Dr. Noel Browne, architect of the proposal, accused of promoting promiscuity among other reprehensible things!

Violence

The position of women in Ireland (both the six and 26 counties alike) is worse than in most other countries in Europe. "Domestic violence" - the euphemism for physical assault in the home, is very widespread. We are all familiar with women who often "fall", "walk into a door" etc. It is seldom taken very seriously by the judicial system with a pro-male slant. Rape is another manifestation of male power to dominate and humiliate women. Here again the legal system and processes actually discourage women from reporting the crime. Rape within marriage is not even recognised.

Abortion

It must always be remembered that new laws do not change the attitudes of society. Instead, new laws reflect what has become to a greater, rather than a lesser extent, already socially acceptable. For example, the 1967 Abortion Act in Britain reflects a growing realisation that abortion had to be taken from the back streets and recognised as a matter which resulted in death or serious injury, without proper health facilities. The situation in the 6 counties at the time was one in which the minority catholic population was not even granted equal voting or working rights. Obviously in such a reactionary situation, women's rights had little chance of coming to the fore. Each year around 4,000 women travel to Britain from Ireland for abortions. This outlet has obviously cut down the numbers of back street abortions, yet they still undoubtedly take place. Between travel and the actual operation, women have to scrape together about £300 which for working class women is hard to find. By denying even information on abortion to those in need, SPUC and their fellow travellers are in effect driving women once more to the back streets and possible serious injury if not death.

With the pursuit of monetarist policies on both sides of the border, the resulting cuts in health-care greatly affect women particularly in the areas of early detection of breast and cervical cancers; pre-school child-care facilities are practically non existent limiting the possibilities for women to work.

Women in nationalist areas are especially oppressed. They are the object of verbal and physical abuse from the occupation forces - one of the more publicised incidents being that of Geraldine Skillen who was sexually assaulted in an RUC landrover and later herself charged with assault. Women prisoners suffer strip-searching which has nothing to do with "security" but everything to do with breaking the spirit of women who dare to challenge British imperialism, by making them suffer constant humiliation.

Greater ease in the obtaining of divorce in the six counties is irrelevant given the prevalent social attitudes. While the I.R.S.P. unreservedly calls for the right for women to choose whether or not they can have abortion, for unrestricted availability to contraception, for equal pay for equal work, greater provision of childcare facilities etc. there is little that could be called revolutionary in these basic demands. What must be ultimately achieved is the total change of social attitudes as they stand.

Sex Objects

At the present time, a country which was never progressive in the field of women's rights is being driven further backwards through the amazingly blatant portrayal of women as sex-objects in the media, advertising and the gutter press in particular. It's an inescapable fact that British gutter dailies are some of the best-selling newspapers in Ireland. If the "Eve" concept of woman (the temptress, etc) has gone into the background in the Church outlook, it is very much to the fore in this type of publication! Yet this is hardly the root cause of the problem. From the earliest of educational life, a child is

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constantly being programmed for a particular role in society. After initial experiences in the family milieu, the process of learning to read follows the pattern; the boy helps daddy to do "manly" things - fixing the car or the like; the girl helps mammy in the kitchen, cooking and washing up. Attitudes are formed early; what we find in the gutter press is both a result and a reinforcing of those attitudes of male dominance in society. With the general European swing to the right and conservatism over the past decade, there is little hope at present that Ireland, already a generally conservative country, will do anything radical in the field of women's emancipation.

What Is To Be Done?

So what is to be done? The stock answer of revolutionary movements in general is that the true liberation of women will only come after the demolition of the capitalist system. While this is correct, it must be re-emphasised that ideologies are never formed after the struggle is over. Ideologies and the practice which goes hand in hand with ideology are forged in the heat of the struggle. They can only be tested and tempered in the same heat, and the ideology of the total emancipation and equality of women is no exception.

However, a separatist women's movement which sees men as a species, as the basic problem is not the answer, any more than apartheid is the solution to racism. Looking to existing revolutionary groups in Ireland does not inspire the least confidence that the women's question is being honestly faced. Again the dominance of men and/or other political considerations such as the danger of losing votes, ensures that this particular question is swept into the background. The existence of a formalised women's section in such an organisation (eg. Sinn Fein) makes it very easy for men to pass on "women's matters" to that section. Good egalitarian rhetoric can be maintained without anything concrete having to be done about it and the potentially explosive subject is defused. To rely on those with "high ideals of liberty" to do the right thing by women would be tantamount to entrusting the liberation of Ireland to the goodwill of the British or the cause of socialism to the middle classes.

If in the struggle for a 32 county revolutionary socialist Ireland, half of the working class women are alienated or at best, do not feel part of that struggle, then fundamental questions must be asked about the honesty of these "revolutionaries". There are strong arguments put forward as to the need for an autonomous women's organisation, not the least being, that working class women in general do not have the confidence to confront men and argue their points with sufficient force to be taken seriously. (Again an indictment of political movements in general). Yet in the long term, division is weakness. Both men and women of the working class have a vested interest in the total transformation of society, and it will take a strong united working class to accomplish that change.

If, as the I.R.S.P. maintain, the vanguard party of the working class is an essential part of that transformation, then that party must be seen to reflect the values that it hopes to establish and it must fight for and be seen to fight for, the total equality of women in all aspects. All progressive demands for women's rights must be not only supported but actively campaigned for.

One of the tasks of revolutionary women may well be to educate other working class women in the fight against women's oppression in all its aspects, but it is essential that they educate men, and help draw them away from the ingrained social attitudes which have been built up over hundreds of generations. The oppression of women is not of lesser importance than the struggle for national liberation or socialism. It is of equal importance but in need of much greater emphasis. As Emma Goldman wrote in 1917 **"Emancipation should make it possible for women to be human in the truest sense. Everything within her that craves assertion and activity should reach its fullest expression; all artificial barriers should be broken and the road towards greater freedom cleared of every trace of centuries of submission and slavery."**

Francis Glenn

Extradition - New Climate Needs New Perspective

As we go to press, the result of the final appeal by Dermot Finucane is still awaited. It is most unlikely that the appeal will be upheld and Dermot will be the latest in a growing list of Irish citizens handed over to what passes for a system of justice in the six counties. His extradition will make it all the more easy to speed up the conveyor-belt and facilitate the handing over of Dessie Ellis, Owen Carron, Jim Clarke etc. The list stands at eight now, but will undoubtedly be extended, especially if the Haughey government finds that it can do so with impunity.

Recent months have seen an upsurge in anti-extradition activities in both the six and 26 counties. The release of the Guildford 4 and the revelations surrounding their case and the serving of warrants on Dubliner Dessie Ellis, heightened awareness and a favourable response by the general public.

A successful public meeting was held in Rialto Dublin on the 14th November, it was addressed by Robert Campbell and Tony Sloan, two extraditees currently on bail, as well as Dessie Ellis' sister Martha. From the audience new activists were recruited by the local campaign committee, a much welcome development.

On November 25th, the campaign organised a march of 300 people, including a contingent from Dublin IRSP, through the Finglas area of North Dublin city. It finished with a rally in the shopping centre. Those who addressed the march included Fr. Paddy Ryan, Vincent Byrne (Labour Youth), Harry Fleming (Finglas Sinn Fein) and Martha Ellis. This peaceful protest received saturation coverage from the Special Branch goons and local Gardai - a point highlighted by the speakers.

On December 2nd, a Rally was held in Portlaoise town and outside the prison, which drew support from all over the country. Other activities included meetings in colleges, leafletting of shopping centres, dole offices etc. and the gathering of signatures in a national petition.

In Belfast two well attended protests were held in Lenadoon and Twinbrook with guest speakers from the Anti-Extradition Committee in the 26 counties and relatives of those facing extradition.

While these successes, modest as they are, are encouraging and represent a turn around in public support, there is still much concern about the strategy of the campaign. Many activists are unhappy with the complacency of the national leadership which views its record to date as successful, and is happy to carry on as before. This is despite the failure to prevent a single republican being handed over since Robert Russell!

At the Rialto meeting, concern was voiced that the validity of republican politics was being sacrificed to the expediency of short term gains. Some speakers pointed to the danger of pleading the case on humanitarian grounds, on the innocence of the named persons, on the racism of British justice etc. While perfectly acceptable as tactical ploys, these arguments alone neglected the historic political right of republicans and socialists to fight British imperialism through armed resistance. Indeed 'Fat' Campbell, wanted for the killing of SAS captain Westmacott, said he would rather be extradited then renounce the legitimacy of the liberation war. A brave and principled stance.

Open recognition by Irish people of the perversions and injustices of the British judicial system is not enough.

We must build on this welcome foundation to win and establish widespread support for the necessity of increasing the struggle for a 32 county Socialist Republic.

Dermot McBride

S.I.P.T.U. Streamlines Class Collaboration

Irish trade unionists face a period of enormous changes in the 1990's. Added to the adverse economic conditions is the consolidation of the collaborators and compromisers in the union structures.

While workers suffer redundancies and wage cuts, the leadership of the unions has placed the survival of their privileged existence at the top of the agenda. Echoing the bosses' drive for 'rationalisation' the two major unions in the 26 counties have streamlined their organisations and fused into a single new union.

The Services, Industrial, Professional, Technical Union, SIPTU, was formed on 1st January through the amalgamation of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union and the Federated Workers Union of Ireland.

With a claimed combined membership of 200,000, SIPTU represents one third of Irish trade unionists, this is potentially a very powerful weapon for defending workers living standards. As such the uniting of the two unions is welcome. However, in order to achieve this potential and fully utilise the inherent strength of the new body, the priorities, policies and behaviour of the officialdom which straddles this colossus must be overthrown.

For the purpose of policing their members more efficiently, the union leaders received multi-million pound funding for the merger from the government. The reported sum of £3 million is considered a cheap price to pay by the government and its backers in big business for a continuation of the spinelessness and servility which characterises such government/union deals as the Programme for National Recovery.

When the Irish Congress of Trades Union holds its special conference on February 8th to review the current deal it can be safely assumed that the SIPTU leaders will be among its staunchest defenders. £50,000 a year 'militants' like Attley, Browne, Kirwan, Garry etc. can be relied on to mobilise the mighty bureaucracy, which they control, to reward the 'investment' of the department of Labour funds in the SIPTU enterprise. This financial pay off for class collaboration is accompanied by minor legal reforms in Labour law. Employers will be prevented from obtaining ex-parte injunctions late at night in judges homes against picketers or strikers in a new Labour Relations Bill.

The ICTU has welcomed this civilised concern for interruption of the judiciary's night life and considers it well worth sacrificing the right to secondary picketing. It also removes the present legal immunity of unofficial strikes, pickets on employers' homes and minority actions.

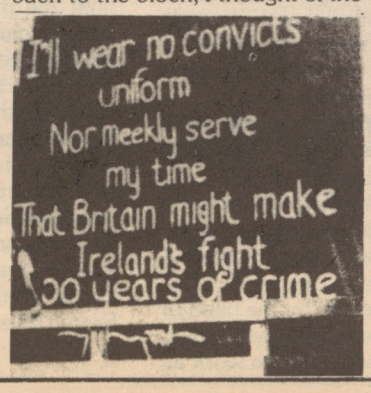
The creation of SIPTU was dishonestly and undemocratically carried out. Plans for the new structure were initiated secretly and its constitution and rules presented for acceptance without the right of amendment by the membership. Having said this, on an organisational basis, all socialists, trade unionists and class conscious workers will welcome this re-unification. It remains to be seen when, and how quickly, this will produce a return to the militant, republican and socialist traditions of its founders, especially those of James Connolly, socialist revolutionary, teacher and martyr of the Irish working class.

Dermot McBride

A Visit From Home

It was a fine morning and I felt the winter sun warm my face as I was escorted across from the cell block to the visits. The walk is only a short one although it sometimes seems a lot longer coming back, particularly when I've a visit with my wife and children.

Because of school, our eldest son can only visit on a Saturday. The wain hasn't been well lately too, so that meant that he'd to be left with relatives. It's sore to leave a child at any time but particularly so when he's sick. The visit went well though as always, and as I took the seemingly longer walk back to the block, I thought of the journey home which my wife had yet to make.



It's roughly a three hundred mile round trip from Belfast to Portlaoise and the thought of this daunted me a little, for I knew the day would be as good as over before the bus arrived back in Belfast. Yet here I was with still an hour before lunch-time and my visit over! It's hard to understand how two people could maintain a relationship with a three hundred mile trek once a fortnight and only a short visit to reflect on, at the end of it.

A lot of people don't see the hardship that is endured so silently by the family of the prisoner. However, there are those people who can see this hardship and who give the help they can to make the life of the prisoner and the family that little bit easier. It is people like these who know the meaning of class-solidarity without running to the nearest dictionary, and it is people like these who help the prisoners and their families remember that they are prisoners of the class struggle.

The class struggle is a struggle which recognises no imperialist frontiers and it is a struggle in which a victory for the prisoner, who personifies class-resistance, is a victory for our class, the working class. The people who give support to prisoners on the basis of class solidarity are an integral part of the rearguard of any revolutionary movement and their role is one which should be recognised by everyone who would see themselves as revolutionaries.

Prisoners here in Portlaoise certainly recognise this solidarity and I would avail of this opportunity to thank those comrades for their support and solidarity with the prisoners and their families. Keep up the fine work comrades, your consistency is a tribute to our class.

Republican Socialist POW

Mass Genocide In Sri Lanka

On Saturday, the 20th January, a demonstration took place in Manchester, organised by the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign, to mark the first anniversary of Viraj's deportation to Sri Lanka. Amongst the speakers were Father John Methuen, priest of the Church of the Ascension, where Viraj was in sanctuary for over two years, Karen Mendis, the Nick Mullen Defence Campaign, Manchester Martyrs Committee, Imam Beig, Muslim leader in Manchester, Sharon Nelson, whose husband is threatened with deportation, and a member of the Viraj Mendis Campaign just back from a fact finding mission in Sri Lanka. A statement of support was also read out from the Irish Republican Socialist Party. The Viraj Mendis Campaign is renewing its efforts to campaign for Viraj Mendis's return to Britain, given the mass genocide taking place in Sri Lanka.

Viraj Mendis, since his return to Sri Lanka, and despite being under threat of death, has sent regular reports on the situation in his country. Much of the following article has been taken from a lengthy statement sent by Viraj in January.

Just over 12 months ago, Viraj Mendis was deported from Britain to Sri Lanka under racist immigration laws. Douglas Hurd, the then Home Secretary, claimed that Viraj would be safe there. However, this is far from the truth, not only for Viraj, but also for the vast majority of both Tamil and Sinhala people.

In the North of the Island, the Tamil Liberation struggle continues in an area occupied by the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF), and in the South of the Island, the UNP government wages war against the Sinhalese population; over 20,000 have been killed and 100,000 have "disappeared".

A photographer from the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign, recently returned from Sri Lanka, said that in some towns in the South of the Island which he visited, there were no male children over the age of 11; many had been killed by the Sri Lankan Army death squads, trained by Britain's SAS, and the rest had escaped into the jungle to the safety of the JVP. **"Every day the killing goes on, in every village, in every town I visited. Every morning mutilated or burnt bodies are found by the roadside, although in tourist areas these are now removed by 9.30 a.m.... I feared for my life and for the lives of those around me. A student human rights activist I met disappeared the following day."**

The contempt that the Sri Lankan government has for any human rights whatsoever was shown last month by the Defence Minister, Ranjan Wijeratne's statement calling Amnesty International a terrorist organisation.

Despite the Sri Lankan Army's massive onslaught by over 20,000 troops in the North, it could not defeat the Tamil Tigers (LTTL) and was replaced by the Indian Peace Keeping Force in 1987. Fearing U.S. intervention, the Sri Lankan government requested that the British government get involved, and indeed, a British Defence Attache was spotted in photographs on the day that the IPKF arrived. The Indian government was only too ready to intervene because of the following reasons:

- pressure from 60 million Tamils in Tamil Nadu (southern India) from whom there was a massive outcry at the atrocities committed by the Sri Lankan government against the Tamils.

"Crows finish off the work started by the Army. Nobody dares to move the body for fear of incrimination."

- its role as policeman for imperialist interests in the region.
- the anti-imperialist nature of the Tamil Tigers, and its potential influence not only in Tamil Nadu, but also the entire Indian sub-continent.

The Sri Lankan Army, now freed from its role in the North, could be used against the Southern Sinhalese working class, which was already historically opposed to Indian intervention on the island. As the Tamil Tigers put it early last year, in an invitation for co-operation with the Sinhala People. **"The very laws and militia used for the oppression and genocide of the Tamils have been turned against you."**

The Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign's propaganda had pointed to the JVP as being the main danger to Viraj Mendis. Mistakenly, the JVP had been described as fascist, and was regularly compared to loyalists in the six counties. It is now realised that this is not the case, but that the major threat comes from the government itself. A Guardian reporter has put the ratio of government to JVP killings as 15 to 1.

Last June, the government announced a state of emergency, in response to the JVP-led strike of transport workers, postal workers, dockers etc. The demand was for a minimum wage. Well-organised, the strike won considerable concessions. Two components have pointed to the JVP as having at least some revolutionary content - the holding of Marxist education classes within the working class, and recognition that "Indian expansionism" is the enemy. However, the fear of "splitting the country", against the Indian ruling class has led to the JVP taking a chauvinist position against the Tamil People's right to self-determination.

At present the Tamil Tigers remain strong. As the campaign's photographer put it **"For only a few hours during my stay did I feel safe - when I visited the areas controlled by the Tamil Tigers in the east where the army and police are confined to barracks."** The JVP is temporarily weakened, no doubt, by the genocide taking place against the Sinhala population by the Sri Lankan government.

Viraj continues to be vocal about the situation in Sri Lanka, further putting his life in danger, and has asked for his supporters in Britain to call for an end to aid to Sri Lanka. Last year the Paris Aid Group, consisting of Britain, Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, West Germany, Japan, Sweden and USA agreed to give US $785,000,000 to the regime, 30% more than the previous year, thus backing the government's slaughter of thousands of people.

In January, a close associate of Viraj's, Gayan, was tortured and killed for campaigning against this aid. There is no doubt that the threat to Viraj's life increases daily. Efforts are being made internationally to find him a safe country. And the campaign demands his right to return to Britain, which is ultimately responsible for his present situation.

FMLN Fight On

On November 11th, 1989, the F.M.L.N. launched a major offensive against the government forces in El Salvador. The offensive was launched after the government backed death squads bombed the offices of the FENASTRAS (the National Workers' Federation), killing 10 trade union activists and injuring 30.

Since the initial attacks made world-wide headline news, there has been a virtual news black-out of events. The offensive has not petered out; as we go to press the F.M.L.N. forces are still in control, not only of large rural areas but indeed of sectors of the capital city, San Salvador. The I.R.S.P. unequivocally supports the FMLN and the Salvadorean people in their war against the U.S. backed government forces and death squads.

"They Say It's Over, We Say It Isn't..."

Interview with Ana Guadalupe Martinez (member of the FMLN Political Diplomatic Commission).

Q. What is the current situation of the offensive?

A. It isn't the same as it was at the beginning. Permanent activity is forcing the army to keep reacting to our moves. They can't free positions in San Salvador, and despite their victory speeches, they know the FMLN is almost intact and suffered almost no casualties. The immense majority of deaths have been civilians.

Q. How long can the offensive be maintained?

A. The offensive has continuity which will unbalance the army's ability to react. The armed forces and ARENA can't stabilise the situation in the cities because of huge problems in economic and political spheres. They're filling their government with reactionary forces that support genocide. The government is internationally isolated and has problems of legitimacy. It's beginning to feel pressure because of the deaths of the Jesuit priests.

In one or two months the situation will become impossible for them. Right now they don't feel the economic, social, and political costs because they're thinking in military terms. They're saying that it's over, but we say it isn't. We've barely begun what we've always done, guerrilla war.

Q. Were the military objectives of the offensive's first phase achieved?

A. The main objective was to bring the war to the cities. We believe it was achieved 100%. For the first time the army couldn't say the FLMN is a scattered force with no combat capabilities that hits and runs and stays in rural zones. Now it's clear that our main theater of operations is the cities where the war will be felt by those who have always financed and conducted it, but have never lived it. For the first time the military chiefs and powerful economic sectors can say they have lived the war.

We also achieved our political objective; to show the nature of the regime in El Salvador. Cristiani, with his image and his speeches, had veiled the rightist essence of the regime. Now that he's limited to repeating battle reports in every press conference, it's obvious that we have a military regime with a civilian voice.

Q. The army has hardened its stance against negotiations. How does military action improve the perspectives for a political solution?

A. There's an expression "the harder they come, the easier they fall." The FMLN surprised the military because they believed in their own reasoning: that the guerrillas were weak and without military capability, using negotiations as an elegant way out. Now that the FMLN is a real political and military force, they say. "We aren't going to negotiate with a strong enemy." And this hardness won't change without a purging of the army.

The military uses recent events in socialist countries as proof of the thesis that the FMLN can no longer maintain an armed struggle. We say the opposite, that it proves the need for a true democracy in El Salvador. Strong pressure is hitting the government to cleanse the army and create conditions for an opposition to exist - including the FMLN - with real guarantees and subject to civilian power. This was discussed at the superpower summit. The government can no longer say: "No-and that's it."

Q. If a new round of negotiations occurs, will the FMLN still demand a purge of the army, disbandment of the security forces, reforms to the judicial system, and new elections with FMLN participation?

A. We'll put forward this package - it's useful. But we have another point of view about negotiations. Since November 11, it has been clear that El Salvador is a divided nation, a society that expresses itself in different ways, and not necessarily by taking up arms against fascism. The Christian Democrats, the churches, Democratic Convergence, popular movements, etc. all enter into this gamut. But bilateral meetings between the government and FMLN give a sense that the choice is between two options; that of the right and that of Marxist-Leninism. This isn't true, and it won't help to unify the country.

The time has come for consensus and a government of consensus. We need a much wider negotiating table that includes the opposition political parties, the social forces, the FMLN, the government, and the armed forces. Everyone says: "Uniting the country is a problem for all of us, not just the FMLN and the government. Let's all participate."

Q. Would the FMLN prefer this type of solution or military victory?

A. Obviously the broad, political solution. Continuing the war means keeping the country destabilised, in chaos, and in a terrible crisis not only suffered by sectors linked to the FMLN but by the entire population. The social costs are enormous.

Britain's Political Hostages

The welcome release of the Guildford Four last year, which exposed the high level conspiracy which existed amongst the police and D.P.P. has somehow managed to be conveniently put on a back burner by the British government. The demands for the release of the Birmingham Six have met with constant stone-walling while the government tries to find ways of releasing them without opening up another can of worms. To this end, the Home Office announced just before Christmas that the men had had their security rating changed from category A (high risk) to Category B. Then came the announcement by David Mellor that the six men will be eligible for consideration by the parole board next year.

Paddy McIlkenny, one of the spokespersons for the Birmingham Six Committee immediately rejected this and said that the six men wanted justice not parole. He went on to stress that the government was attempting to diffuse international interest in the case and that they are "**running scared, if anything the pressure will intensify**".

Alistair Logan, solicitor for the Six, believes the prosecution may well be forced to withdraw the case against them because of increasing defence evidence including the fact that the Special Branch have been sitting on a file for the past sixteen years, containing names of the men who allegedly did plant the pub bombs.

David Waddington, Home Secretary, whilst conceeding that new evidence presented to him by the defence is "substantial and detailed", reiterated that "**it was for the courts to decide, free from political interference.**" These are the same courts that were unable to believe police officers capable of conspiring to fabricate or violently induce confessions, and who threw out fresh evidence in the 1987 appeal.

Since then eleven of the twenty officers, appeal court judges believed incorruptible, have been disciplined. Indeed four of the officers involved in the original pub bombings inquiry went on to join the West Midlands serious crimes squad. This was subsequently disbanded last year and is now being investigated by the South Yorkshire police. Their inquiry only goes back to 1986, but it has been muted that the Birmingham Six case may be included if related evidence is found. Although few people believe in the truth emerging from internal police enquiries.

Protests against the continued incarceration of the Birmingham Six have been mounting over the past few months, due in large part to the work of Gerard Conlon and Paul Hill, who since their release several months ago have, between them, travelled to the United States and all over Europe campaigning for their release as well as raising the plight of other Irish prisoners languishing in English jails.

Paddy Hill, one of the Birmingham Six was recently visited by U.S. congressmen and when Peter Brooke visited the U.S., congressman Joe Kennedy raised the issue of the Birmingham Six with him. Also Congress is to discuss a resolution calling for the case to be re-opened and for President Bush to express concern to Thatcher over "**the miscarriage of justice resulting from the continuing incarceration of the Birmingham Six**". Considering N. America's own record on Human Rights, their concern is somewhat hypocritical but it may cause some embarrassment within government circles.

Derry Man Deported

Meanwhile British persecution of Irish men and women continues. Last October in London, Daniel McBrearty from Derry was arrested and held on explosives charges. The charges were eventually withdrawn but immediately on his release, he was re-arrested and detained until his exclusion order could be signed. He was sent home accompanied by an anti-terrorist officer who told him he was lucky he hadn't been shot, words all the more chilling in the light of the Falls Road murders.

The only evidence against McBrearty were traces of the explosive RDX found on his hand through forensic tests, but these traces could easily have come from contact with another person, and it seems the police were simply out to catch a scapegoat for the Deal bombing.

McBrearty had come to London from Ireland only a week before his arrest to earn money for Christmas. He was interrogated first by police officers and then by the anti-terrorist squad who kept insisting that he was part of the IRA unit that carried out the Deal bombing. He was told that he and his sons would rot in prison. He said his interrogation was "**pure hell**". "**Things got so bad that I said to myself 'these boys are setting me up. I'll never be home again'**".

If it had not been for the release of the Guildford Four, which came on the sixth day of his detention, Daniel McBrearty might be another innocent Irishman condemned to life imprisonment. As McBrearty himself said "**I believe the police got frightened and abandoned their plan.**"

While some still call for Amnesty International to carry out inquiries into events in the six counties and the condition of prisoners both here and in Britain, it is ironic to read in their magazine that "**in accordance with Amnesty's policy, members of the UK must not campaign on behalf of the Birmingham Six.**"

Martin Foran Framed

Another Irishman, victim of a frame-up by the notorious West Midlands serious crimes squad is Martin Foran from Limerick who is at present incarcerated in Frankland Jail, Durham. He has served five years for a robbery which he has consistently denied committing, and during this time his health has rapidly deteriorated.

At the time of his arrest, he was suing the police for a conviction in 1977. Detective Inspector Mathews was involved in his arrest; Mathews also helped obtain a confession from Patrick Hill, one of the Birmingham Six.

The main evidence against Foran comes from a statement made by Paul Addison, who admits being involved in the Trident Pub robbery. When Addison was first arrested he stated that Foran had nothing to do with the robbery but after being re-interrogated by Mathews, he changed his statement, incriminating Foran. This surely speaks for itself.

Nineteen alibi witnesses have gone to the Yorkshire police saying they saw Foran in Birmingham city centre on the day of the robbery. What is more, Foran had even visited a central Birmingham police station to make a complaint about his car. Strangely the West Midlands police found it necessary to shred all documents relating to the time Foran was in the station and to his arrest. It is said that the destruction of these documents is hampering investigations into the case.

There is no forensic evidence against Foran and the publican he is meant to have robbed at knife-point has never been asked to identify him. The publican has said that the only characteristics he remembers about the three raiders were that two of them had West Indian accents.

Why has Foran had to serve five years for a crime he so obviously didn't commit, whilst Inspector Mathews, who was forced to resign from the serious crimes squad in 1986, is living in Spain? (a favourite retreat amongst criminals!).

Racist legislation such as the P.T.A. is used freely and indiscriminately against Irish people. Once in custody, both physical and mental torture is used to extract confessions. The media and in particular the gutter press ensures that no fair trial can be had, since from the time of arrest until charges are actually preferred, he media is free to indulge in any flight of fancy it wants. The very fact of being Irish and in the dock, guarantees that the scales are heavily weighted against the accused. The I.R.S.P. calls for the immediate release of the Birmingham Six, Martin Foran and all Irish hostages languishing in British jails.

Anna Hughes

Workers at a Bucharest factory, after the insurrection.

Is Communism Dead?

The events sweeping through Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union are truly of historic proportions. That is to say they involve the participation of the masses in the political upheavals which daily deepen the crisis of the ruling communist parties.

Indeed, in many countries these parties no longer rule or even exist. In each of the states established after World War II (with the exception, for the moment of Albania) the regimes installed at the behest of Stalin have been forced to share or surrender political power, (former party leaders have been executed or jailed for crimes against the people). Some, like Poland and Hungary, are openly declaring for a capitalist economy. In others such as Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Romania and East Germany (GDR) there remains a varying commitment to the economic aims of socialism.

In all of these countries the momentous upheavals have had a common enemy, the un-democratic, corrupt and incompetent nature of the ruling party and its dictatorial control of state and government. Hence the demand for democracy has been most prominent in all the popular protests, strikes and marches.

These developments in the so-called 'satellite' countries are inseparably bound up with those in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The U.S.S.R. which arose out of the 1917 socialist revolution led by Lenin and the Bolshevik party is now being torn apart by the emergence of mass-scale popular movements in the various Republics, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania (The Baltic states) are seeking outright national independence, economic and political. In Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia, unresolved ethnic and religious differences, some dating back 1,000 years, have erupted into armed conflict. Pogroms against religious foes and against the Russian controlled state apparatus resulted in the sending of thousands of troops into Baku as 'peacekeepers'.

Allied to these political upheavals is the total failure of Gorbachev's economic reforms. Food and consumer goods are scarcer now than in 1985 when he launched the era of Glasnost and Perestroika. Social tensions are heightening by the minute. Increasing demands for an end to the Communist party's monopoly of power, for democratic reforms, for the introduction of capitalist economic measures, etc. are being raised. Added to this chaotic concern for the future development of Soviet society, is the evergrowing list of historic crimes perpetrated under Stalin, Kruschev and Brezhnev, which the present ruling bureaucracy has acknowledged as authentic.

So, with a besmirched, criminal past, a troubled crisis-ridden present and an uncertain future for the ruling party of the first workers state; despite 70 years of state control and planning, the continued inability of the economy to meet the basic needs of all the peoples of the USSR and East European States, the resurgence of national and religious based struggles, etc; the question is posed to all fighters of oppression: Is communism, the revolutionary doctrine of Marx, Engels and Lenin, dead?

To this we answer NO! For us the crimes, the incompetence, the failures, the corruptions are not indictments of **communist** regimes but on the contrary are testimony to the departure from communist principles by these bureaucratic parasites. For us, it is not **communism** which has failed in these states but a travesty of it; a bureaucracy which has cynically employed the authority of the October revolution to create and support its privileged existence at the expense of the working class internationally.

Central to this betrayal of communism has been Stalin's doctrine of creating socialism in one country. This abandonment of the internationalism of Lenin and the early years of the communist international is today exposed as a non-marxist expediency, motivated by the desire to consolidate power in the russian workers State.

By contrast the Marxist perspective of the Russian revolution as only the first step in the world revolution has been vindicated. The gains of the 1917 socialist revolution are now gravely endangered. These conquests can only be defended by world revolution, by successful socialist conquests of power in the advanced industrial countries, thereby making possible the technological scientific and trade co-operation which can revive and develop the Soviet economy.

For us the answer to the economic (and consequently political) problems of the USSR and Eastern Europe lies not in the hands of the imperialist banks and multi-nationals. Nor does it belong to the discredited regimes who so earnestly try to deny their culpability for the crimes of the past. It belongs to those genuine revolutionaries who support and fight for real socialist democracy both East and West.

For us the question of the viability of communism is a very practical and urgent one. As socialist republicans, we fight the injustices of imperialism. We can only do this consistently if we are armed with (amongst other things) a revolutionary theory which contains an ideal of the type of society which we wish to have established. If we do not have such a theoretical notion of our goal, we can only react blindly against the system which oppresses us.

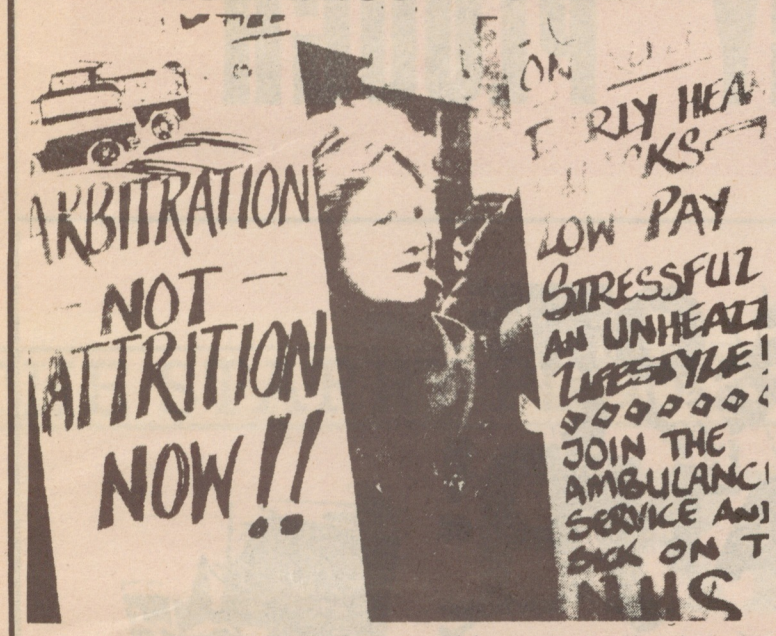
For the purpose of this article as an immediate response to events it may be acceptable to state our case in such limited form. For the purpose of a thorough response to the ideological attacks on communism, a lengthy debate and discussion is necessary in the party, in the paper and in the working class and anti-imperialist movements. This we are about to undertake.

Some of the issues which must be addressed are: is the Soviet Union a socialist or state capitalist country, is the bureaucracy a ruling class? Is the Gorbachev leadership a break with Stalinism? What is meant by Stalinism? Is centralised planning of the economy non-viable? Should the CPSU allow the secession of the Baltic states, Azerbaijan etc? How do we evaluate those in the revolutionary communist movement who have always and uncritically (until now) supported every action of the CPSU.

And finally: What must we do as Irish communists to advance world communism.

Dermot McBride.

Militant Action Needed In Support Of Ambulance Workers



On January 30th, mass rallies and walk-outs took place in support of the Ambulance workers in the six counties and in Britain. As an exercise in demonstrating the extent of public sympathy for the workers' demands, it was a great success. However, amidst all the media reports of public sympathy, there was evidence of something much more important i.e. industrial muscle. It was easy to overlook because the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) obviously felt that a 15 minute stoppage was enough to show that something was being done, without overtly offending the employers.

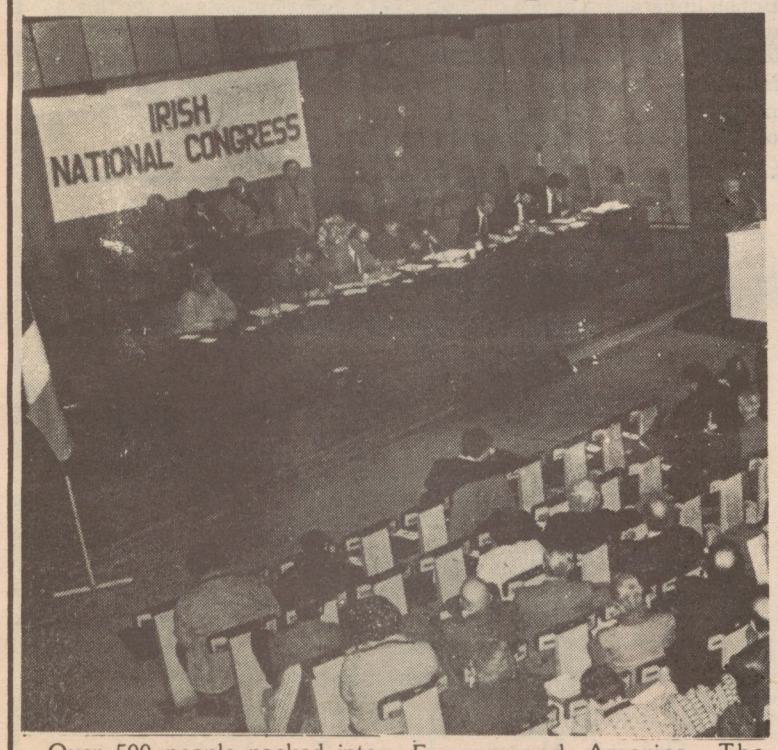
The type of solidarity which was briefly demonstrated must be consciously used as the powerful weapon it undoubtedly is. Public sympathy in itself, is a somewhat fickle thing and it carries little weight, unless of course it is properly mobilised on the streets. The longer the dispute lasts, the more difficult it will be to maintain the level of public sympathy it enjoys at the moment. However, a much less fearful use by the union of the undoubted strength of solidarity action, would not only ensure a more speedy victory, it would be an excellent step in rebuilding working class confidence in itself, after the defeats of the early and mid 1980's of the major British trade unions.

In the six counties, the Ambulance workers' representatives are determined to keep to their pledges of no all-out strike action - again in the interests of public sympathy. Obviously if the strongest weapon in the workers' armoury - the withdrawal of labour - is not going to be used, the employers are already at an advantage. It is **now** that the stops must be pulled out, not later when endurance, both in human and financial terms, has run out.

Naturally the ICTU leadership will not initiate militant industrial action any more than its British equivalent the TUC. The Trade Union leadership in Ireland has a reputation for compromise; the programme for National Recovery in the 26 counties is an example of this. It is only workers themselves who can force the pace and by-pass their leadership, in this case, by taking action to support the ambulance workers. In the long term, this will be to the benefit of all workers. From their present position of strength, the Ambulance workers must win, but Kenneth Clarke will not be swayed by public sympathy alone.

Francis Glenn.

Inaugural Conference Of The I.N.C.



Over 500 people packed into Liberty Hall in Dublin on Saturday 20th January, for the inaugural conference of the Irish National Congress. Messages of support were read out from many groups and individuals from Britain, Europe and America. The conference was chaired by Bernadette McAliskey and a variety of motions, including a 10 point constitution, were adopted by conference, also a national executive was elected.

One of the main aims of the I.N.C. is to demand a British intent to withdraw as a pre-requisite to the establishment of an independent sovereign nation. Only this "can truly represent the interests of all the Irish people and guarantee their rights through national self-determination to freedom, unity and peace.

The I.N.C. pledged their support for a variety of campaigns including the Birmingham Six, the Winchester Three, Judith Ward, the campaign against plastic bullets, the repeal of censorship laws and the anti-extradition campaign.

Several speakers spoke about the importance of culture, especially the Irish language in the struggle for independence, and described how people have been victimised because of their defence of the Irish language.

The whole question of emigration was discussed, and conference condemned the low wages and bad working conditions which Irish workers are forced to endure. They pledged their support to the campaign for a guaranteed minimum wage.

A series of events is planned for the 75th anniversary of the Easter Rising, which takes place next year, with the objective of maximising support on the streets for the aims of the 1916 Proclamation.

From the point of view of the national liberation struggle, the conference was very encouraging. Any initiative which raises, in the 26 counties, the question of British occupation and repression, the treatment of Irish people in Britain and the consequences in the 26 counties itself, must be welcomed.

We believe that the 26 counties is the key to the present impasse in the national liberation struggle. However there is a serious question posed about the direction and orientation of the I.N.C. Given the wide spectrum of political backgrounds from which the participants come from, the only way it can possibly hold together is by working to a common political denominator. There is nothing very revolutionary about the resolutions adopted. There are possibilities for mobilising around the 75th anniversary of the Easter Rising but again there is the danger that in the interests of keeping the show together, militancy will be kept to a minimum.

It is our contention, that it is only through the mobilisation of the working class that national liberation can be achieved. Where is the orientation towards what Connolly called **"the incorruptible inheritors"** of the Irish struggle? It does not exist. The emphasis is on nationalism, Irish culture and self-esteem. This is not the road to a workers' state. It is a vehicle for republicans of varying degrees of green (including environmentalists) to raise the national question on a broader scale. It is most unlikely that making calls on the Haughey government will have the slightest effect.

Having said that, it in no way precludes us from being involved in any activities which this body may set in motion. In spite of its shortcomings, any mobilisation in the 26 counties is to be welcomed.

Francis Glenn

In Memory

The Central Committee of the Irish Republican Socialist Party remembers with love and pride our fallen comrades:
Vol. Joseph Craven, Belfast Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by loyalists, 5th December, 1983.
Vol. Colm McNutt, Derry Brigade, I.N.L.A. killed on active service, 12th December, 1977.
Vol. Roddy Carroll, Armagh Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by an R.U.C. death squad, 12th December, 1982.
Vol. Seamus Grew, Armagh Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by an R.U.C. death squad, 12th December, 1982.
Vol. Thomas (Ta) Power, Belfast Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by the I.P.L.O. 20th January, 1987.
Vol. John O'Reilly, Belfast Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by the I.P.L.O. 20th January, 1987.
Vol. Neil McMonagle, Derry Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by S.A.S. 2nd February, 1983.
Vol. Mickey Kearney, Belfast Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by the I.P.L.O. 18th February, 1987.
Vol. Hugh Ferguson, Belfast Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by the Workers Party, 20th February, 1975.
Also our friend Mary McGlinchey, brutally murdered, 31st January, 1987.

The reconstruction of the revolutionary party of the working class is the only tribute befitting our fallen comrades. Let us now set about this task.

James Connolly Prisoners Committee, New York remembers with pride our fallen comrades:
Vol. Joseph Craven, Belfast Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by loyalists, 5th December, 1983.
Vol. Colm McNutt, Derry Brigade, I.N.L.A. killed on active service, 12th December, 1977.
Vol. Roddy Carroll, Armagh Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by an R.U.C. death squad, 12th December, 1982.
Vol. Seamus Grew, Armagh Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by an R.U.C. death squad, 12th December, 1982.
Vol. Thomas (Ta) Power, Belfast Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by the I.P.L.O., 20th January, 1987.
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Vol. Hugh Ferguson, Belfast Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by the Workers Party, 20th February, 1975.
Also our friend Mary McGlinchey, brutally murdered 31st January, 1987.

We owe it to you have died to honour the cause you nobly served. Other generations have failed, we must not.

The Staff and Vols. of the Irish National Liberation Army remember with loving pride our fallen comrades:
Vol. Joseph Craven, Belfast Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by loyalists, 5th December, 1983.
Vol. Colm McNutt, Derry Brigade, I.N.L.A. killed on active service, 12th December, 1977.
Vol. Roddy Carroll, Armagh Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by an R.U.C. death squad, 12th December, 1982.
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Vol. Mickey Kearney, Belfast Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by the I.P.L.O. 18th February, 1987.
Vol. Hugh Ferguson, Belfast Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by the Workers Party, 20th February, 1975.
Also our friend Mary McGlinchey, brutally murdered, 31st January, 1987.

They died for their nation and their class, but they live on in the memory of Irish workers.

The I.R.S.P. Support Committees, London, Glasgow and Bristol remember with pride our fallen comrades:
Vol. Joseph Craven, Belfast Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by loyalists, 5th December, 1983.
Vol. Colm McNutt, Derry Brigade, I.N.L.A. killed on active service, 12th December, 1977.
Vol. Roddy Carroll, Armagh Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by an R.U.C. death squad, 12th December, 1982.
Vol. Seamus Grew, Armagh Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by an R.U.C. death squad, 12th December, 1982.
Vol. Thomas (Ta) Power, Belfast Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by the I.P.L.O., 20th January, 1987.
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Vol. Hugh Ferguson, Belfast Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by the Workers Party, 20th February, 1975.
Also our friend Mary McGlinchey, brutally murdered, 31st January, 1987.

"One does not negotiate the sovereignty of the people. One defends it with arm in hand." Augusto Sandino.

The Republican Socialist Prisoners of War, in Long Kesh, Magilligan, Maghaberry, Portlaoise and England remember with love and pride our fallen comrades:
Vol. Joseph Craven, Belfast Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by loyalists, 5th December, 1983.
Vol. Colm McNutt, Derry Brigade, I.N.L.A. killed on active service, 12th December, 1977.
Vol. Roddy Carroll, Armagh Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by an R.U.C. death squad, 12th December, 1982.
Vol. Seamus Grew, Armagh Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by an R.U.C. death squad, 12th December, 1982.
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Vol. Hugh Ferguson, Belfast Brigade, I.N.L.A., murdered by the Workers Party, 20th February, 1975.
Also our friend Mary McGlinchey, brutally murdered, 31st January, 1987.

We remember their resolution, their uncompromising manner, they were good socialists, good soldiers and good friends. They shall never be forgotten.

The Irish Republican Socialist Committee (North America) remember with pride our fallen comrades:
Vol. Joseph Craven, Belfast Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by loyalists, 5th December, 1983.
Vol. Colm McNutt, Derry Brigade, I.N.L.A. killed on active service, 12th December, 1977.
Vol. Roddy Carroll, Armagh Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by an R.U.C. death squad, 12th December, 1982.
Vol. Seamus Grew, Armagh Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by an R.U.C. death squad, 12th December, 1982.
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Vol. Hugh Ferguson, Belfast Brigade, I.N.L.A. murdered by the Workers Party, 20th February, 1975.
Also our friend Mary McGlinchey, brutally murdered, 31st January, 1987.

When the freedom of our country and class has been won, let us guard it well, remembering it was paid for in the blood and lives of those now dead.

THE STARRY PLOUGH

IRSP Reply To Criticism

Since the rejuvenation of the I.R.S.P. in 1987, after the attempted enforced dissolution by apolitical elements outside of the movement, we have been the object of interest for many people, including revolutionary parties and groups internationally. None have subjected us to more scrutiny and criticism than *The Leninist,* a tendency whose avowed aim is the "reforging of the Communist Party of Great Britain."

The Leninist group unequivocally and practically alone among British socialists, defended our right to organise during the attacks of the first three months of 1987. A joint IRSP/Leninist school on Marxist theory was held that summer which was extremely beneficial. The Leninists are perfectly well aware of our circumstances, shortcomings and our efforts towards the development of a genuine communist party.

To date we have made no reply to their many critical assessments. However, in *The Leninist no 82* we find a large section of the paper given over again to criticism of ourselves which is carried over into issue No 84 in their review of *An Camcheachta.* In fact the cumulative effect of the various articles is to stamp us as being left nationalists and non-communists. Our refusal to exclusively support Hands Off Ireland has not endeared us to them.

Solidarity Work

First of all, I will deal briefly with the question of solidarity work in Britain. Since Hands Off Ireland failed to expand and has in fact contracted to a composition of Leninists and the Sheffield Defence Committee, it obviously does not fulfil at this time the criteria necessary for a solidarity movement which can be supported by the IRSP to the exclusion of all others.

While we would have liked to have seen more distinctive slogans used, we do not disagree with the basic politics of Hands Off Ireland! It has simply managed to almost totally isolate itself from a potentially wider base. The theory is fine but the practice has resulted in the alienation of other groups (other "small organisations" as Alan Merrik (Leninist) describes them and incidentally the **"two months of meetings"** which were said to have taken place in the run up to H.O.I., which gave the impression there was enough debate around the issues, was in fact two meetings, held in successive months).

A question of priorities is raised: has H.O.I. the defeat of Britain in Ireland as its raison d'etre, or is it striving to be the most ideologically correct solidarity movement, aiming to be the reincarnation of the solidarity movement of the 1920's, the brainchild of the CPGB, the party which the Leninists are trying to reforge? Perhaps what Lenin wrote in 1920 should be borne in mind: "**It is far more difficult - and of far greater value to be a revolutionary when the conditions for direct, open, really mass and really revolutionary struggle do not yet exist, to be able to champion the interests of the revolution (by propaganda, agitation and organisation) in non-revolutionary situation, among masses who are incapable of immediately appreciating the need for revolutionary methods of action.**" (V.I. Lenin: *Left Wing Communism and Infantile Disorder,* Peking, page 102).

At the present time of a non-revolutionary situation in Britain, we are prepared to accept support from almost anyone who is interested in ending British occupation and domination in Ireland. We are not in the business of supporting one small solidarity group over another. Practical help is needed at this time, not fine words (The much maligned Red Action has, since late 1987, been consistently supporting 5 Republican Socialist POWs). Broadening the existing H.O.I. has nothing to do with watering down slogans or politics, but everything to do with the flexibility (as opposed to opportunism) which should be the hallmark of communists.

Starry Plough

Serious criticisms of our paper and hence of our own development merit comment. The twin epithets of "**Left nationalism**" and "**eclecticism**" have been freely thrown at us: "**our polemical sword is blunt, the 1987 attacks were caused by lack of ideological clarity, the hammer and sickle is wrapped in the tricolour, we practice political agnosticism**". etc. etc.

To begin with, it is not our intention to build a party of clones. Our membership is totally committed to the fundamental principles of Scientific Socialism (Marxism). We are totally united in the belief that the I.R.S.P. is the only political entity capable of becoming the vanguard party of the working class in Ireland and which sees national liberation as an essential victory to be won on the way to social revolution.

Far from being political agnostics, we have engaged in debate in *An Camcheachta,* debate which is wide ranging and which shows publicly that differences of opinion within the I.R.S.P. do not result in violence, a perception which some detractors attempt to perpetuate. The fact that we did not instantly leap into Leninist fundamentalism may be distasteful to the Leninist group, but the encouragement of much needed debate and forestalling any sense of instant political infallibility was (and is) seen as essential, given historical problems we have suffered from. "**Ideological struggle only has any relevance as open and honest ideological struggle.**" - Alan Merrik.

Marching against the British state

As we approach our first national congress in six years, divergences and diversities must be aired. If dogmatists choose to view this as eclecticism (ie. have no consistent philosophy, drawing from a wide range of sources) that is entirely their prerogative. We did not have the luxury of spending two years closeted in internal debates and emerging with an immutable, infallible road to successful revolution.

The other main epithet that is thrown at us is that of "**left nationalism**" and even "**poisonous nationalism**". The latter comment was inspired by letters from Cdes. McBride and Doyle in *An Camcheachta* on the subject of the Harland and Wolff Shipyards. Comrade Merrik in his comments shows a remarkable lack of understanding of the nature of the shipyard: it is never the management which attacks and sometimes kills non-protestant workers, but the sacred workers themselves following a fascistic ideology, namely loyalism. Should communists protect a bastion of fascism? We recognise the great necessity of winning workers away from that reactionary ideology, but this will never be achieved by pandering to or having accommodation with loyalism.

The inescapable fact here in Ireland is the existence of an army of occupation in a section of our country. The question of national liberation naturally has a high priority in a movement which has had members imprisoned, assassinated or killed in action against that occupying force. Living and developing the reality of repression makes our outlook somewhat different from those who have not experienced that reality. We cannot divorce ourselves from repression, we cannot ignore the realities which a national liberation struggle throws up.

In the given conditions in which we find ourselves, we are steadily developing towards a genuine communist party. We have consolidated and are growing in both membership and confidence. There are many peculiarities in the struggle for social revolution in Ireland which do not apply in "Great" Britain.

We clearly see the dangers of nationalism and the chauvisnism which can develop from it, but that in no way changes the inescapable fact that we are Irish communists, and the sharpest contradiction here in Ireland is the division of this country and the armed maintenance of that division by British Imperialism. It is a division which fundamentally divides and weakens the working class in Ireland (as a geographic entity). In no way do we see our recognition of reality as contradicting our communist outlook. Perhaps the Leninist should bear in mind a statement which is to a degree appropriate:

"**The whole point now is that the communists of every country should quite consciously take into account both the main fundamental tasks of the struggle against opportunism and 'Left' doctrinairism and the** *specific features* **which this struggle assumes and inevitably must assume in each separate country in conformity with the peculiar features of its economics, politics, culture, national composition (Ireland, etc.), its colonies, religious divisions and so on and so forth**". (ibid page 95).

Our ultimate goal is a workers' state and not simply "Brits Out". As internationalists we see this as advancing the cause of workers in world terms and in particular the cause of workers in our nearest geographical neighbour, Britain.

Francis Glenn

ACCESS to INFORMATION on abortion and a woman's right to CHOOSE to have an abortion.

Well Women's Centre (Dublin) 728051
DUBLIN: 01 680043/794700
CORK: (021) 502848 - Mon. evening
BELFAST: (084) 324914/ 249696
Irish Women's Abortion Support Group (London) 031 251 6332/3
(Tues. 6-9 p.m. for direct contact)
Merseyside Nursing Home (Liverpool) 035 7271851
Raleigh Nursing Home (London) 031 6711541/2
South Manchester Clinic 036 4872660